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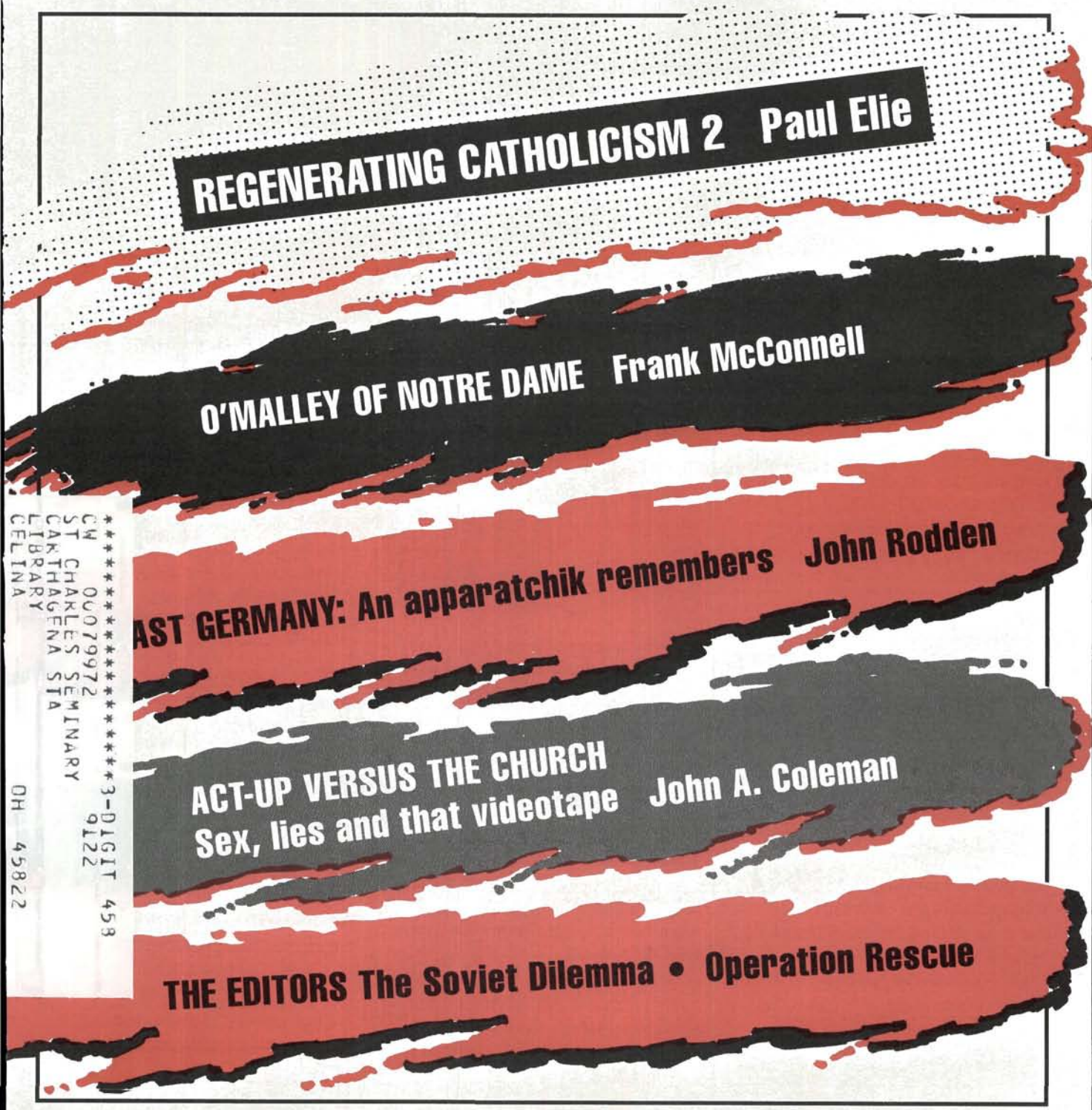
REGENERATING CATHOLICISM 2 Paul Elie
O'MALLEY OF NOTRE DAME Frank McConnell
AST GERMANY: An apparatchik remembers John Rodden
ACT-UP VERSUS THE CHURCH
Sex, lies and that videotape John A. Coleman
THE EDITORS The Soviet Dilemma • Operation Rescue

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CORRESPONDENCE

Kudos for Kass

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

To the Editors: Leon Kass's "Why Doctors Must Not Kill" [August 9] is a brilliantly reasoned and eloquent answer to the proponents of "aid-in-dying." We are indebted to both Dr. Kass and *Commonweal* for this essay, which is deserving of wide circulation, particularly within the medical community.

JAMES J. DOYLE, C.S.C.

Additional copies of Commonweal's *special supplement on euthanasia are available. See the advertisement on page 549 for details.*

Why life is sacred

Bay Head, N.J.

To the Editors: In the thoughtful articles on abortion appearing in *Commonweal* over the past year and, more recently, on euthanasia, no one seems to bring up what I consider the radical basis for making such decisions: our ontological relationship to God *vis-à-vis* our desire to control all things, including life and death. Is not this wish for total control an ongoing effect of Original Sin? Should not these ultimate and sacred decisions be left in the hands of the Creator?

In his article [August 9], Daniel Callahan quotes the 1891 Supreme Court decision in *Union Pacific* v. *Botsford*: "No right is more sacred, or is more carefully guarded, by the common law, than the right of the individual to the possession and control of his own person." True enough, at the socio-political level, and I have no argument with Callahan's article. But is there any way we can have "rights" in our relationship with the ground of our being, our Creator, Sustainer, and Last End? If we truly grasped the ontological closeness of our souls to God, "we would confront," as Louis Dupré wrote in *The Common Life*, "God's uncreated presence to the soul" at the root of our being, and rights would be furthest from our minds.

The sacredness of life lies not in itself but in its source. As for control of our own bodies and persons, who of us has had control over his or her own birth? And which of us has the wisdom to know at what point in our life spans (or the life span of anyone else) God deems us ready to move on to new life?

ELEANOR MERRICK

Callahan inconsistent

Commerce, Tex.

To the Editors: Daniel Callahan's categorical rejection of euthanasia ["Aid-in-Dying: The Social Dimensions," August 9] makes curious reading in light of his acceptance—albeit reluctant—of legalized abortion. The concept of personhood seems to be the key to his distinction between the two, but since personhood is an arbitrary determination at the beginning of life, couldn't it be just as easily denied at the end to those who have lost the qualities we associate with the concept?

Callahan writes, for example: "Euthanasia is mistakenly understood as only a personal matter of self-determination, the control of our own bodies...." Why is abortion not similarly "mistakenly understood," particularly when there is no question but that a second body is involved?

His dilemma is even clearer in his penultimate paragraph, which begins: "Our duty to relieve suffering cannot justify the introduction of new evils into society." Isn't that exactly the point made in the 1970s when opponents of abortion on demand raised the specter of euthanasia as a logical aftermath of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision?

Is the professional ethicist performing a service to society when he compartmentalizes his musings? In considering life-and-death concerns, is it logical to treat euthanasia and abortion as essentially distinct moral issues? Rather than the elusive concept of personhood, might Callahan not do better to use visibility as the real determinant of the right to live?

EDWARD M. CORBETT

The author replies:

I try not to "compartmentalize" my "musing" and thus see no inconsistency between my views on abortion and those on euthanasia. I leave it to the reader to determine whether the following propositions, all of which I hold, are inconsistent:

1. The (present) euthanasia debate is about whether to allow competent, undeniably human, persons the right to have a physician take their life if they request it. I do not believe that they should have the right to such a request or that physicians should have a right to respond to one. (Mr. Corbett confuses matters by bringing in

(Continued on page 558)

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COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXVIII, Number 16

Correspondence	530
Editorials	531
Act-up v. the church: *John A. Coleman*	533
Light in August: *John Garvey*	535
The everlasting dilemma: *Paul Elie*	537
O'Malley of Notre Dame: *Frank McConnell*	543
Clinging to an illusion: *John Rodden*	547
Stage: *Gerald Weales*	549
Screen: *Richard Alleva*	550

BOOKS

Holocaust Testimonies: *Madeline Marget*	552
Bully for Brontosaurus: *Nancy M. Haegel*	553
An Honorable Profession: *Raymond A. Schroth*	555
We Must Take Charge: *Dennis O'Brien*	556
Catholics Coming Home: *Karen Sue Smith*	558

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Comrades into citizens

Events in the former U.S.S.R. outpace the capacity of journalists, diplomats, politicians to report and decipher coherent patterns of change or even to devise potentially useful assistance from the West. Editors no less than presidents see events through a fog darkly.

The late August success of the resisters in Moscow, led by the charismatic Mr. Yeltsin, seemed to create a mythic moment, parallel in rich possibilties to those of the Czechs in Wenceslaus Square and the East Germans before the Berlin Wall in 1989. Had the Velvet Revolution come, at last, to the Soviet Union?

Alas, it seems not. The immense and complex problems that lie before the now-ramshackle superpower-without-a-name are cause for grave concern, not least because the pace of change makes it increasingly difficult to call a halt to the dissolution of the empire and to fix on a point where the structures of reform can take hold. So for example, while the democratically elected president of Georgia presses for independence, his cabinet resigns over his dictatorial methods of doing business, then joins the opposition, more a momentary coalescence of protestation than the embryonic makings of political parties. The local militia take leave of the president and sets up its own encampment outside the capital. Where and how will this momentum—and others equally dangerous—slow? The current upheavals may as easily end in political chaos, ethnic hostility, and civil war as in a slow and painful move toward decentralized and democratic institutions.

Mikhail Gorbachev in his August 27 speech trying to rally the delegates of the Supreme Soviet, eloquently argued that a union of republics remained an economic and military necessity, while dissolution "would threaten the lives and properties of millions of people." He spoke of the responsibility of those who call for dissolution "not only to their own people, but to humanity....We do not have the right to make a mistake of this nature." Yet in the weeks since, the constituent pieces of this looser union have become ever more elusive—each part threatening to take leave of the larger body as if each were capable of full-blown economic and political autonomy. What may be manageable in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania will be problematic even for the relatively prosperous Ukraine and Georgia, to say nothing of fractious Armenia and Azerbaijan. In all of them, the economic and political problematics are subject to fracturing by ethnic minorities; each declaration of independence is followed by hoary claims for redrawing borders.

Can the West help shape the course of events? Yes and no. Of course, there must be a readiness to sustain the democracy movement by words and gestures and a demonstrated willingness to provide material help, humanitarian aid and, where useful, credits and loans. And there should be resistance to the notion that an empire disintegrated into petty fiefdoms, some of them nuclear-armed, is a plus for American foreign policy. Even so, the rapidity and uncertainty of change—not simply in Moscow

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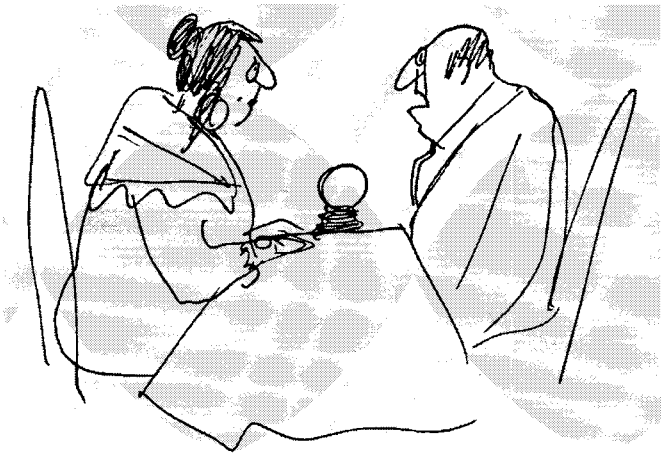

"That's it*—just 'Things will get worse before they get better'?"*

and Leningrad but in Riga and Tbilisi—necessarily circumscribes the influence of the West. It is finally the citizens of the disappeared U.S.S.R. who must take responsibility.

The failure of the coup-makers to hold back the tide finally both allowed and forced the reformers to act decisively. It also revealed an insidious condition—the terrible fatalism and inertia of the people themselves. Can there be democratic change if the "demos" are not engaged in the process? Writing from Klin, a mere fifty miles from Moscow, Bill Keller of the *New York Times* captured this attitude in an interview with Yuliya Gladyshev: "We've been through so much, and now a coup. Well it was just more of the same drama. One thing we've learned from our history: we can endure anything" (August 29, 1991). There will be no democracy, nor democratic institutions, nor a society governed by laws democratically arrived at, if the current upheavals and unprecedented opportunities are seen simply as one more twist of history that the people must endure. The great task of Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and other national leaders is to convince their fellow citizens that—at last—this is not history as usual.

BLOODY KANSAS

"We're America's worst nightmare," says the husband of the brash comedian Roseanne Barr, "white trash with money." Reading commentary about Operation Rescue's recent anti-abortion demonstrations in Wichita, some of the same clash of cultures and moral styles was evident. For many people, Operation Rescue represents another kind of American nightmare: "Religious zealots on the loose."

Ironies abound in this confrontation between the champions of "choice" and "reproductive freedom" and the champions of "unborn babies." Operation Rescue, directed by its unrepentantly patriarchist founder Randall Terry, draws its troops not from university campuses but from blue-collar occupations and working-class neighborhoods. In Wichita this summer more than 2,000 demonstrators were arrested for blocking the entrances to the city's three abortion clinics. When asked to explain their actions, most of the demonstrators speak unapologetically in religious language. They talk of God as eagerly and as vaguely as a different kind of activist speaks of the ecosystem or peace.

Nothing sets off alarm bells among the "open-minded" like the specter of religion and politics in an illicit embrace. But such narrow-mindedness has not always been the case among progressive forces. "In that dramatic scene on Calvary's hill three men were crucified," the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote in his "Letter from Birmingham City Jail." "We must never forget that all three were crucified for the same crime—the crime of extremism. Two were extremists for immorality, and thus fell below their environment. The other, Jesus Christ, was an extremist for love, truth, and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. So, after all, maybe...the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists."

Explicit religious language has been a powerful force for political justice throughout American history. To be sure, the question of abortion is not as simple as Operation Rescue would have us think—although the willingness of one Wichita clinic to perform third-trimester abortions dramatizes exactly what is being chosen by those who demand "choice." But constitutionally the situation in Wichita is clear-cut. Operation Rescue has a manifest right to stage sit-ins. Peaceful protest and civil disobedience have deep American roots, and have served this country well, especially when majoritarian prejudice or apathy perpetuated injustice.

By the same token, Wichita authorities have the obligation to arrest and remove those who break the law. Abortion remains a constitutionally protected right, and such rights must not be abrogated by extraconstitutional means. Even if *Roe* v. *Wade* is overturned, unborn babies will continue to be killed in the United States. Changing the hearts and minds of Americans about this divisive question is the best way to change the facts of abortion. Moral authority, not physical coercion, must carry the day. Unfortunately, Operation Rescue is often in danger of confusing the two, and its physical harassment of women seeking abortions only hurts its estimable cause. A more creative extremism is needed.

As Catholic teaching has long held, not every evil can or should be the object of legal suppression. Because of the highly personal nature of pregnancy and the ambiguous legal status of the fetus, abortion is likely to remain such an issue. Reasonable and conscientious men and women who deplore abortion differ on what its legal status should be. The actions of Federal District Judge Patrick Kelly in Wichita are the most recent case in point. Kelly, a practicing Roman Catholic, has aggressively enforced the law against the demonstrators. The judge's loyalty to his oath of office and courage in the face of physical threats are worthy of admiration. What is more dubious, however, is Kelly's enjoining Operation Rescue from blocking entrance to the abortion clinics through the application of an 1871 law designed to inhibit the Ku Klux Klan.

In order to do this, Kelly ruled that the protests were a form of discrimination against a class of persons, namely women who

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are seeking abortions. Clearly, however, the 1871 law was intended to prevent racial discrimination, not political protest or civil disobedience. Local laws against trespass and disorderly conduct are more than sufficient to open access to the abortion clinics, and Kelly's imposition of federal authority in this case seems preemptive. Will not those who now cheer Kelly's broad interpretation of the law rue such jurisprudence when in the near future a law is stretched to prevent women from procuring abortions? Will prochoice activists change their tune about civil disobedience if abortion is outlawed in some states? A less condescending, Barbarian-Hordes-At-The-Gate attitude toward Operation Rescue might help ease the transition when abortion advocates find themselves at the other end of the federal marshals' nightsticks.

REPORT FROM LOS ANGELES

ACT-UP V. THE CHURCH

SEX, LIES & THAT VIDEOTAPE

First there was the real event: On December 10, 1989, Act-up (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) demonstrators disrupted Sunday Mass at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral by shouting and lying down in the aisle; drowned out Cardinal John O'Connor's sermon with shouts of "bigot" and "murderer"; and desecrated the Eucharist.

Now we have the video: "Stop the Church" shows the strategy sessions in which Act-up planned the "die-in" at the cathedral as well as selected portions of the event itself. "Stop the Church" is a combination of guerrilla video, cinema verité, and interpolated materials and music, representing the events and the issues from Act-up's perspective. It mocks the cardinal and the church and misrepresents the church's views on people with AIDS and the AIDS crisis. "Stop the Church" gives viewers a full dose of hateful and demonstrably untrue statements about the Catholic church and about Cardinal O'Connor. Nonetheless, the film has made its way onto PBS stations in Boston, San Francisco, North Carolina, Los Angeles, and New York. In an era of creeping political correctness, rising intergroup hostilities, and conflict over what does or does not constitute legitimate forms of free expression, this is a story worth attending to.

"Stop the Church" had been scheduled to appear in late August on the Public Broadcasting Service's P.O.V. series (Point of View). PBS canceled it on August 12. John Grant, a vice-president, said "Stop the Church" did not meet PBS standards for broadcast quality and that it was "inappropriate for airing because its pervasive tone of ridicule overwhelms its critique of policy." It is unclear how or why P.O.V. or PBS screened and selected the show in the first place. Perhaps what Grant described as ridicule, others saw as satire. In any event, when a higher up at PBS took a closer look, there seems to have been some shuddering second thoughts. But the decision to cancel the video did not hold.

Out of PBS's first misjudgment in scheduling "Stop the Church" and its subsequent cancellation grew an acrimonious controversy with gay groups—a controversy that local PBS stations have now used as a justification for showing the video. After the August cancellation, Act-up and Glaad (Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation) helped coordinate protests around the country, demanding that "Stop the Church" be shown. WGBH in Boston broadcast it in an after-midnight time slot before the controversy got going. KQED in San Francisco showed it twice in prime time on August 31 without commentary or discussion. In Los Angeles, Act-up threatened to lead a membership cancellation drive and to jam phone lines during KCET's summer fund-raising drive if the station did not show the film. In a press conference, Cardinal Roger Mahoney, archbishop of Los Angeles, said that the president of KCET, William Kobin, told him that the decision to air the video was due largely to this pressure. Kobin says that the cardinal's statement is "totally untrue." Yet, when the station said it would show the "Stop the Church," the threatened boycott was called off. On September 6, the Los Angeles station broadcast the video (watched by 400,000 people) and an accompanying discussion (watched by 70,000 people).

Defending the station's decision, Kobin argued that ordinary viewers had a right to see the film and discuss the issues it raised. In a story in the *Los Angeles Times* he is reported as saying these issues were: Catholic bashing; church-state relations; first amendment rights both to worship and to free speech; censorship and taste; and the responsibilities of public broadcasting (September 6, 1991). But in his introduction to the televised discussion these were narrowed to censorship, taste and judgment, and the role of public television in dealing with sensitive material. Whatever his lofty agenda, Kobin and, discussion moderator, Jeffrey Kay were clearly fixed on defending the station's decision and several times insisted that the controversy itself superseded concerns about the video's quality or content.

The discussion that was to frame and examine the video very quickly devolved into an unfocused conversation that neither examined the content of the video nor dealt with the standards that public television ought to apply in dealing with "sensitive" material. In fact, some discussants ended up seeming to defend the video by ignoring or minimizing its blatantly anti-Catholic content. Here one of TV's favorite mechanisms for handling controversial issues—presenting a "fair" discussion between proponents and opponents—did not work. It hardly could have. KCET declined to invite a member of Act-up or the man who made the video, Robert Hilferty. The station reasoned that their

LIBRARIANS AND INDEXERS TAKE NOTE: Starting with the issue of January 17, 1992, *Commonweal* will break with its own practice and commence numbering each separate issue at "Page 1." Thereafter our annual index (published in the final issue of each calendar year), will list all articles, editorials, and reviews with issue dates as well as page numbers. We hope this change will assist readers, researchers, and librarians alike.

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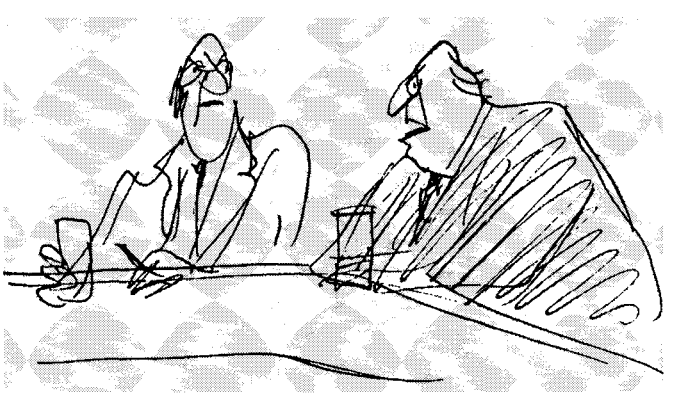
point of view was sufficiently represented in "Stop the Church." This led representatives of other gay groups, such as Glaad and Dignity, to withdraw from the panel. Cardinal Mahoney declined to send a representative from the archdiocese because "such participation would only serve to legitimize a display of anti-Catholicism." This winnowing process produced two gay "representatives" and two Catholic "representatives," who sparred with one another without engaging the issues of content or standards.

Jeffrey Kay, the moderator, then turned to two media experts. Tracy Westin of the Annenberg School of Communication at USC and Van Gordon Sauter, former president of CBS News and head of its standards and practices division. Sauter proved the most clearheaded and pungent of the panelists. He gracefully parried Kay's insinuating introduction of him as CBS's chief censor with, "I thought of myself as an editor." Sauter's strong suit, however, was not the larger issues so much as a professional's sense of programming and production quality.

What PBS had called ridicule, Sauter called venomous hate and loathing for the Catholic church. What Westin, his fellow panelist, saw as a video "enhanced by not being professionally done," Sauter found to be "a trite, unimaginative, doctrinaire piece of cinema verité about a tantrum—a dreary film." "I would like to think that access to PBS is not so low. I am hard pressed to see the passion to get it on the air." In addressing the Catholic-bashing issue, he said, "You picked the easiest religious target in America...to clobber, since the Catholic church is not 'politically correct' on two issues important to the left: abortion and the role of women." Sauter suggested that if a "protected" interest of the left had been subject to such a disparaging and denigrating view, PBS would never have aired the video.

What about the video itself? Although Act-Up has claimed that the video targeted Cardinal O'Connor and Catholic public policy positions on AIDS, and is not an attack on the Catholic church, the rhetoric of the video tells another story. "Stop the Church" opens with a voice-over question, "What is the Catholic church?" Seven of the eight respondents conjure up negative images—e.g., sadistic nuns—and pejorative-to-scornful words: the church is arrogant, sterile, fundamentalist, patriarchal, homophobic, racist, hypocritical, a purveyor of hate. One man asks archly, "Really, do you know anyone in your circle, who takes this church seriously?"



"Why do they always pick on my *religion?"*

The video then segues into a rendition of Tom Lehrer's "Vatican Rag" and visuals of trick photography mocking the rosary, the Eucharist, holy pictures, the Mass, and Cardinal O'Connnor. In a third sequence, the Act-up planning meeting for the cathedral demonstration features various untrue statements about the cardinal and the church. One speaker asserts that the cardinal has said about gays: "Let them all get AIDS." One man's effort to pose a contradiction in their tactics—"Look, [demonstrating in the cathedral] would be like their forcing their Mass on us at this meeting"—is drowned out. The absence of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation from the KCET broadcast robs us of any answers as to how a media group monitoring anti-gay stereotypes deals with the cognitive dissonance of supporting a video full of vitriolic anti-Catholic statements and stereotypes.

A fourth section shows the "die-in" at St. Patrick's. Protestors should angry epithets at Cardinal O'Connor; and a man repeatedly yells, "stop killing us." After the police have carried out on stretchers those lying in the aisle, we see the one and only glimpse of O'Connor as a sympathetic human being; he is seen telling the congregation, "I am always anguished by hate.... We must never respond to this kind of hatred with hatred but only with love and understanding."

In a final segment, parishioners are unflatteringly portrayed leaving the church and voicing their negative reactions to the "die-in." Since the video neither shows nor discusses the desecration of the Eucharist that in fact occurred, some of the parishioners' comments are made to seem inexplicable and irrational. Though Act-up has claimed that it did not countenance this profanation, participants in the strategy planning session gave supposed historical examples of "blocking the communion rail"; an inducement, it would seem, to the eucharistic desecration that followed. Nowhere in "Stop the Church" or in the discussion framing it, do we hear the Catholic position on the AIDS crisis; neither do we see any acknowledgement of the pastoral, medical, financial, or political efforts the Catholic church makes on behalf of people with AIDS.

On the day KCET was to broadcast the video and discussion, Cardinal Mahoney held a press conference and ran an ad in Los Angeles newspapers. He called the KCET decision to air the video, "an irresponsible decision which can only encourage the hate mongers in our midst, for this film glorifies and celebrates antireligious bigotry." He urged those who would see the show to ask themselves whether they agreed with his judgment and, if so, to write the station and consider following his example in withholding financial support for KCET. The cardinal's press conference was incorporated into the KCET documentary as were remarks and rejoinders from William Kobin. Kobin, in fact, appears four times in the documentary: to introduce it, to explain the decision to air the video, to counter Mahoney's charges, and to conclude the program. He says several times that he was not insensitive to claims about Catholic bashing in the media, that some people would find scenes in the film offensive, and that KCET in no way endorsed hate. But, as he also said several times, the controversy over the video had grown so large that KCET simply had to show it.

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We are unlikely ever to know the full story of pressures and counter-pressures that led to PBS's original scheduling of "Stop the Church" or KCET's decision to show it. More was at stake than issues of free speech, treatment of sensitive material, and the responsibilities of public television. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that what Kobin called an "agonizing decision" is a consequence of the fragile state of our public discourse and the conditions that "political correctness" arbitrarily imposes. In this instance, the Catholic church has been the object of lies and derisive treatment. We are politically "incorrect" on a number of issues, as Van Gordon Sauter said. But others have been the object of similar treatment. HSS Secretary, Louis Sullivan was drowned out by demonstrators at the 1990 International AIDS conference in San Francisco. The pastor from the Metropolitan Community Church (a largely gay and lesbian congregation) who participated in the KCET panel told other participants off screen, that he had been under severe pressure, including threats, against appearing on the show. The Los Angeles AIDS Project has disavowed the representative from their group who appeared. And, irony of ironies, KCET has been picketed again by gay groups for airing the video and the discussion in the form it did. Act-up wants to be treated fairly when its issues are being considered and debated, but it has precious little concern for the opposing views of others even in the gay community.

The apparent dilemma of KCET to show the video or not, seems to raise questions about freedom of speech. Others, Cardinal Mahoney for one, who argued against showing the video, appeal to our sense of fairness, we might say they want "fair" speech. On balance, I think the cardinal is right. PBS would never have show a such a bigoted and untruthful film about the women's movement, Jews, or blacks, not even if framed in a discussion of the "larger" issues.

JOHN A. COLEMAN

John A. Coleman, S.J., is professor of religion and society at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley.

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

LIGHT IN AUGUST

THE TRANSFIGURATION & HIROSHIMA

One early morning when I was in a Texas town on August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration, I watched a spider approach a fly across its web and realized as I watched something about to kill something else that this feast occurs on the anniversary of the day America dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. I was in Amarillo, where bombs are made. The horrible coincidence of light filling bodies on this day—in one case the uncreated light of Tabor, the ultimate affirmation of the divine/human reality we are meant to share, in the other a light made to destroy anything human—is, if you want one, as good a sign as any that we are living in the last days so many fundamentalists yearn for with a nearly pornographic passion.

I don't yearn for or trust any signs of this sort. The occurrence of the Transfiguration on the day of Hiroshima is probably only one more grotesque coincidence among many, but to ignore it would be as stupid as to make too much of it. It is horrible (like the use of the code name Trinity for the development of the bomb), but not necessarily proof of the end of time as much as it is a proof that horror is always with us. That horror is revealed most clearly in the light of something so full of human hope as the Transfiguration is. The feast is one that shows us what Christ came to do, what we are called to become, and at the same time it ought to fill us with dread. The juxtaposition of the feast with the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima is a clear, terrible irony. The context of the Transfiguration story in the whole of the Gospels is another reason to fear.

At the Transfiguration Jesus is revealed as the fulfillment of the law and the prophets, and shines with "the uncreated light," the presence of the Holy Spirit, the vision of God that can be seen by human beings to the extent that they are capable of bearing it. The glory of the Resurrection is seen here before Jesus' Crucifixion. It is not only Christ's glory, but our own. The mystery of the Incarnation is that it is not a single miraculous moment, but a sign of the reality all human beings are meant to share. We are to be what Christ is; he is the first-born of many.

The church was always clear about the difference: divinity is his by nature, ours by adoption; but we have tended to emphasize the difference without looking at the gift, the fact that this divinity has been offered as life to us, for our taking, our sharing. The difference is easier to bear than the similarity. It is easier to think of humanity as limited by our perceptions than to think that what is genuinely human is measured not only by a divine standard, but that humanity is seen fully only when it is seen as potentially divine.

The accounts of the Transfiguration all speak of the same three witnesses, Peter, James, and John. All speak of their seeing and being astonished by the revelation of Christ's glory. Peter, James, and John are also the disciples who accompany Jesus to Gethsemane—and fall asleep during his agony, and later deny him. It is important that the witnesses of his glory should, even having seen this, deny him—and then go on after Pentecost to be his witnesses. That they are able to go on, having forgotten for awhile what they saw, is a great encouragement. The forgetting is frightening.

It may seem impossible that someone could see a loved teacher, a baffling but obviously authoritative rabbi, surrounded by a light unlike any seen before, conversing with Moses—representative of the law—and Elijah—representative of the prophets—and then grow sleepy during his hour of greatest danger, and flee in fear

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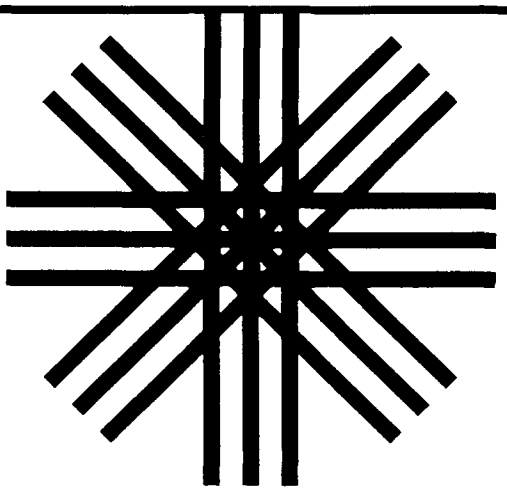
when he was threatened with death. Even in the moment of witnessing the Transfiguration, Peter offers in a stunned way to build booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah—"he did not know what to say, for they were afraid," Mark says, and Luke says simply, "not knowing what he said." This stupefaction in the face of glory is the best that can be expected of the best of disciples. They forget glory's meaning, never were able to grasp it in the moment it was revealed, and they flee at the scent of danger. These are the people who become the foundation of the church at Pentecost.

The point here is that, before looking forward to the Resurrection and Pentecost, we have to look at the most important fact about their most constant behavior: they forgot, and kept forgetting. At the Transfiguration, they did not see fully, or even adequately, what was in front of them. Having seen it, however dimly, they failed to connect it with Jesus' desire for their attentiveness during his suffering on Gethsemane, where even in their fear they were able to sleep—sleep in fact means more here than their weariness, but our own state—and when they saw his real fate, when they saw that crucifixion was the fate of the chosen one, they abandoned him.

The center of the eucharistic prayer is called in the Greek of the New Testament the *anamnesis*. The literal translation of the word often translated as "memory" or "remembrance" is "against forgetting." Like a lot of good Greek words it speaks of something positive (remembering) in negative terms. This way of forming words works in English as well: "Remembering" means to put something together again, the implication being that something was pulled apart, dismembered, in the first place. Immortal means not dying; "*athanatos*" means the same thing in Greek. But memory, the attempt at understanding what happened, is especially well-served by seeing it in this upstream way, "against forgetting." It is important to ask why our languages have wound up structured this strange way. Is it a mistake? Or is some vision buried there?

What does it say about the world we live in that, quite often, the best way we can find a word for something is to describe it as *against* something else that is, apparently, the pervasive alternative? We can speak of the Resurrection as "against death," and of attention to the central mystery of our faith as a deliberate movement "against forgetting." It was possible for the Apostles, having seen Jesus' Transfiguration, to sleep through his agony, and desert him at his death.

Anamnesis is essential to our work as Christians. It is possible not only to forget what Jesus has done for us, but to remember it in a way that amounts to forgetting—to limit it, making it a specifically "religious" understanding, ignoring the fact that all human reality is illumined by the uncreated light of Mount Tabor. We have heard and told this story so often that we have become comfortable with it (which is to say, we make a little idol of it); we are not even up to Peter's bewilderment, which is at least an understandable response to something wonderful. It is an idolatry which puts human will above all that allows us to forget the divine image, in us and in everyone. That human need to control and dominate leads to the light of Hiroshima, and is the most profound forgetting.



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Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2500-4000 words should be submitted to the editors of COMMONWEAL who will make the final decision following consultation with a panel of experts. The winning essay will receive a prize of $1,000 and will be published in COMMONWEAL. The editors reserve the right not to award the prize.

Deadline: October 1, 1991. Announcement of Prize: December 15, 1991. The prize-winning essay will be published in COMMONWEAL's January 17, 1992 issue. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors after January 1.

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THE EVERLASTING DILEMMA

'YOUNG' CATHOLICS & THE CHURCH

PAUL ELIE

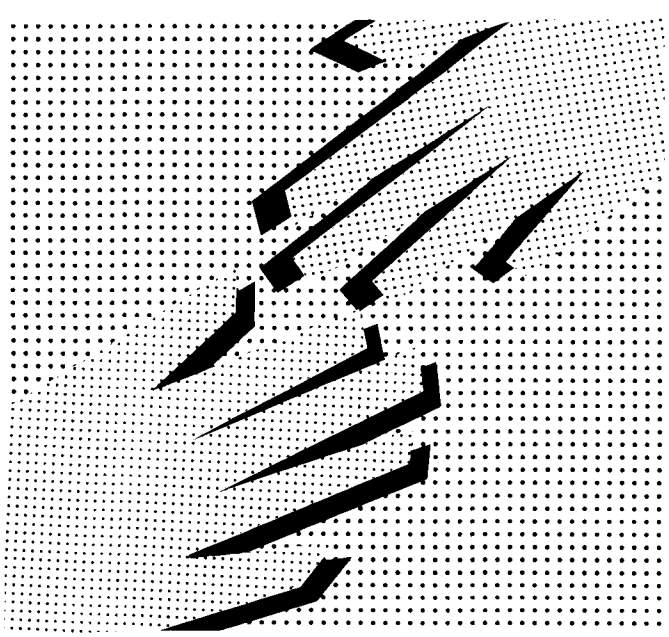
It's something I do whenever I go to church, part of the ritual before the ritual, the liturgical pregame. I claim my six feet of pew, shuck my coat, check my watch, and make a nodding attempt to woo solemnity. Then I size up the crowd. Anybody else young here? There's a couple whose matching madras shorts declare them JUST MARRIED. A girl wearing a Cardinal Hayes sweatshirt twists a finger through her brilliant red hair. A Columbia University student, Opus Dei division, is bent over in the stylized prostration of a fresco saint. I take an interior leap, joining them in that most inclusive of groups, the generation. Our generation. What brings us together? What do we share? How do we believe? What are we doing here, today?

These are questions that many people have been asking, in voices edged with parental concern. A year ago, you'll remember, *Commonweal* published "Re-Generating Catholicism" (September 14, 1990), a hefty special issue in which fifteen Catholic leaders addressed the challenges the church faces in ministering to Catholics raised since Vatican II. In the *New York Times* last spring (May 1, 1991), Peter Steinfels reported on the changing religious aspects of Catholic higher education, leading off with Avery Dulles's claim that a drift toward "total secularization" is seen as "by now inevitable in practically all Catholic universities." Soon afterward Raymond Schroth reflected further on the subject in these pages (June 1, 1991). And somber essays about "How We Can Preserve the Presence of Our Beloved Namesake Saint" are staple fare in Catholic-school alumni magazines, as inevitable as the class notes and the fundraising campaigns.

These discussions have focused on the dichotomy between the large numbers of young Catholics and the vagueness of our religious identity. If you cast the net wide, as *Commonweal*'s special issue did, and claim as "young Catholics" all of the people between the ages of twenty and thirty-five who at least "retain residual loyalties [to] and identification" with the church, we are a crowd (40 percent of adult Catholics are younger than thirty-five, according to one study). Having grown up in the shadow of Vatican II, during a period of phenomenal social change, we share a compelling experience. Yet our religious character is felt to be limp and shallowly rooted; perhaps we aren't authentically Catholic. Older Catholics have found it hard to get a handle on us—a problem compounded by our lack of a collective identity, and by our seeming reluctance, or inability, to articulate our religious beliefs and act on them.

Of course, concerns about passing on the faith are endemic to Catholicism, and to religion in general. In this country the alarm seems to sound every other papacy or so, as the church feels The World aggressively courting the faithful's hearts and minds and attention spans. Responses to the alarm have been various. After the Third Plenary Council a century ago, the parochial school system tried walling the world out in order to nurture God's children within; a generation ago the church as a whole took the opposite tack, practically redefining itself as God's people in order to go out into the world along with those children.

Like those efforts, the present discussions about young



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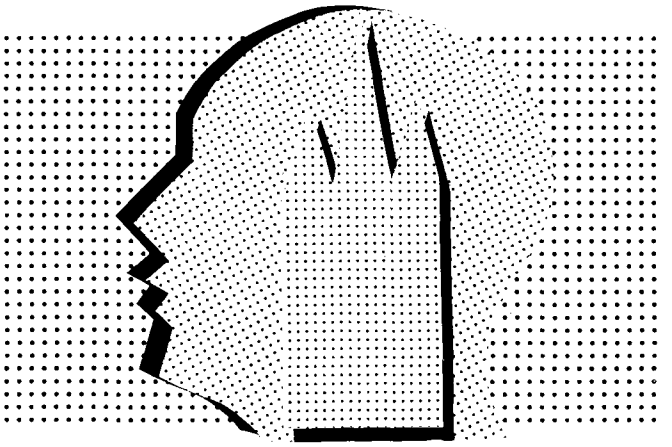
Catholics have the split personality of a saving act, with everyday pessimism undergirded by the hopefulness of a redeemed people. There are important differences this time around, however. Most striking, to me, is the extent to which these discussions about young Catholics are grounded in Vatican II's understanding of the church as the people of God. If what I've gleaned from paperback religious history is sound, previous reclamation efforts focused on saving souls, with the church's continued eminence taken for granted. In contrast, the present discussions about young Catholics suggest that Catholic leaders are less concerned with our welfare than with the well-being of the church generally. This is a natural consequence of the council's revised understanding of the church, and its corresponding revision of the nature of salvation. If you see the church chiefly as the body of its people, and not chiefly as, say, a divine agency appointed by God to do his saving work on earth, your in-house evangelizing efforts will be less menacing but also somewhat less compelling. Since you see young Catholics as responsible adults and not as God's children in need of divine protection, at most you can strongly encourage them to be open to the life of faith. Your sense that Catholicism isn't taking hold on the younger end leads you to think not of souls lost for eternity, but of the church losing its vigor in the here and now. Because you can't get all that worked up about young people going to hell, you mostly worry that if you fail to sponsor a Catholic identity in them, the religion you've known will go out of this corner of the world, and the kids will have missed out on something grand.

Protest though you may, if you are an American church leader today, deep down you see Catholicism as necessary in our culture but optional for this or that person. This is realistic, right-thinking, open-minded, a balm for the soul in tough times—but it lowers the stakes of your enterprise, and ushers in a spirit of contradiction and self-doubt right from the start.

The recent discussions about young Catholics are prime examples of this spirit of contemporary Catholicism, in which the deposit of faith can be obscured by the concerns about how to pass it on. As such they suffer just the ailments—generation gaps, failures of communication, religious practice distinct from religious content—for which they sought to prescribe remedies. Consider last September's "Re-Generating Catholicism." Here were thirty-two pages of essays, roundtable discussions, statistical breakdowns and the like, in which Catholic leaders asked themselves and each other: How or why should young adults continue as bearers of the Catholic tradition? Earnestly, with loving care and strains of optimism now and then, they tried to understand our relationships with the church—our tendency to pick and choose from church teachings, our relative ignorance of Christian history and doctrine, our way of measuring the church by our own experience, our willingness to keep religion at the margins of our lives, and our basically good intentions despite it all. Robert Egan summed up their concerns in his afterword: "How do we hand on anything we love or care about? How do we hand on the inspirations for our committed service and the causes of our joy? How do we hand on an intellectual



tradition, a symbolic and sacramental tradition, a prophetic and politically engaged tradition, a tradition of valuing community, in a culture like our own?"

Only a stone-hearted young Catholic could have been left unmoved by such concern. Even so, few of us could have failed to notice that in this groupthink about young Catholics, "young Catholics" remained a stretchy, all-purpose abstraction. As far as I could tell, only two real live young Catholics contributed to the special issue. The leaders addressed their readers as "we" and young Catholics as "they," to wit: "When we talk about young adult Catholics, we are usually talking about a crisis.... Maybe our young are leaving the church because they are selfish and callow.... Or perhaps, in some way, we ourselves are to blame." For the most part they discussed "young Catholics" in vague collective terms; only rarely did a sense that we are singular people emerge.

Granted, recognizable trends prompted the abstract us-and-them approach. The clergy, lay leadership, and *Commonweal*'s audience are graying; young Catholics don't seem all that eager to describe our spiritual lives to others; and even if we were, we might not be able to do so with the sophistication they would like from us. These trends, of course, are the substance of the challenge that "Re-Generating Catholicism" set out to engage.

The issue's contributors, splendidly contradictory on most points, shared a key assumption about the nature of this challenge. The problem, they seemed to say, is that young Catholics are in the church but not of it. We belong to parishes, attend services, marry other Catholics, and hope to raise our children Catholic, whatever that might mean. We keep abreast of the most visible church activities and controversies, let our thoughts tend Christward when time permits, have vague spiritual experiences and ethical criteria, mean well. Okay, they allowed, we are Catholics—and yet (they went on) we lack a moral and religious vocabulary, an informed awareness of tradition, an acceptance of duty, an understanding of obedience, a respect for a hierarchy of values, a sense of the church's absoluteness. In short, they said, we lack the essential traits of Catholicism as it has been passed down from age to age.

Such a view enables church leaders to identify much that is true about young Catholics today, as well as to address absences or failures of the spirit that they feel in the church themselves. Yet in the end the in-the-church-but-not-of-it interpretation obscures as much as it clarifies. Why? It puts the emphasis in

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the wrong place, presents the paradox upside down. More than we are in the church but not of it, my experience suggests, young *Catholics* today are of the church but not in it: Though we will describe ourselves as *Catholic*, we balk at calling ourselves Catholics, wary of the belonging the stronger noun form connotes. The differences are subtle, but crucial. I think the church's recognition of this might encourage young Catholics to stop sliding down the slippery slope and get on with our ascent.

How are young Catholics "of the church"? First of all—as the experts' statistics make clear—we consider ourselves Catholic. We share the "Catholic sensibility" and "sacramental imagination" identified by Eugene Kennedy and David Tracy. We measure our lives, and the church's, by Christ's teachings in the Gospels. We feel the influence of this or that priest, nun, or lay person (often a parent). We take a familial, proprietary interest in the doings of Governor Mario Cuomo or Father Bruce Ritter or the "20/20" exorcist. Even if we don't know our way around the *Summa* or read the encyclicals the day they come out, we seek wholeness, harmony, and radiance, a sense of order and a rule of life, a body of values and images that will locate transcendence in the day to day. We have misgivings as we strive for "worldly" success, and feel uneasy as we attain it. Pursuing our own ends, we try to be unselfish and attentive to other people's needs and suffering. We want to live Christian lives and then go to heaven—and yet we are (most of us, most of the time) wary of full-blown belonging, the sort of commitment that, Catholic leaders contend, would regenerate Catholicism and American culture as well.

In what ways are we not quite "in the church"? The most talked-about indicator, of course, is that few of us consider ourselves called to serve the church as priests or religious. As much as this has to do with the demands of professed religious vocations (celibacy, tests of orthodoxy, long hours, low pay), it has more to do with a deeper impulse: namely, that so many of us are willing to let our Catholicism rest at the level of "residual loyalties and affiliation." This impulse shakes out for us in all sorts of ways. We might check "Catholic" on a census form or Lilly questionnaire, but we often check our Catholicism at the door of the top-flight graduate school or big corporation; conversely, we too often leave our skills as thinkers or workers at home when we go to church, consigning the dirty work to the priests and veterans and fanatics. Rather than seriously challenging church positions to which we might object—sexuality, the role of women, capitalism, war—we disregard them, or else confine our dissent to our kitchens and bedrooms. We partake of the sacraments as if they're performed for us as a public service, without feeling compelled to serve in our own ways. Though we feel misgivings about success, we stay on the ladder; though we want to be unselfish, we don't go out of our way to be. While the surveys count us as "young Catholics," for us church membership is usually a secondary affiliation—mainly we're bankers or teachers or students or feminists or Deadheads or New Yorkers or Giants fans. The church has always been there for us, and so, we assume, it always will be, regardless of whether we play active roles in it. After all, it's not our church; sure, we belong to it—but not really. Someone else will assume the day-to-day responsibility, somebody else will take charge.

Most of these traits were noted by the contributors to "Re-Generating Catholicism." But interpreting them as signs that we are *Catholic* more than we are *Catholics*, and not the other way round, might yield the solutions about how to revive us and the church. It might explain a number of phenomena: Why the polls say the churches are full of young people, while the priests' eyes say the young laborers are few—being "of the church" always and everywhere, we don't need to confirm it by being in the church on any particular day. Why young Catholics, so stealthy and somnolent when we are in church, are so animated by the God-talk in Woody Allen's films or Bill Moyers's PBS chats with Joseph Campbell: glib and elliptical as they are, those people discuss life and death, history and eternity, in the sort of frank, learned language that rarely issues from the pulpits of suburbia. Why our collective identity is so slippery and vague: without the shared liturgy and community that come with being in the church, our of-the-churchness makes itself felt in more varied and ambiguous ways. Why there is a definite "twice-born" sensibility among those young Catholics, especially the better-educated ones, who are learned in and committed to a life of faith: since so little is expected of us by now beyond residual loyalties and affiliation, real religious experience comes upon us like the hand of God. Why attendance at campus chapels, as Michael Hunt noted in the special issue, usually tops that in the average parish: there, far more than elsewhere, young Catholics are encouraged to believe that this is our church, that we are not junior members or summer associates or novices in formation but the thing itself—Catholics, worshiping our God, taking part in the rites of our religion, practicing our faith.

Perhaps most important, seeing young Catholics as of the church more than in it might explain why people thirty-five years old, fully adult by any other standard, can still be considered "young Catholics." If solid, informed, public commitment is

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Catholic leaders' measure of religious maturity, it follows that so many of us, uncommitted less because of age than because of disposition, nonetheless seem so young to them, so reluctant to come into our inheritance, with all its demands and rewards.

Such a measure of religious maturity is a fundamental reason why so many of us will never get there. For the of-the-church outlook I've described is a religion of sensibility; and sensibility, as the *New Republic*'s Andrew Sullivan has noted, "is a paltry substitute for revealed truth," a shadow of the spiritual promise that Jesus announced and urged us toward. Sensibility is not the stuff of commitment. It alone cannot regenerate any church or transform any culture, and a generation of Catholics who consider themselves merely "of the church" won't invigorate their religion, much less usher in any kingdom of God.

How might young Catholics' religion of sensibility be fleshed out and made whole? Clearly our acceptance or rejection of this religion is ultimately our own responsibility. But older Catholics clearly have much to offer us as we come to terms with Christ and the church—if they are willing. Ironically, many such leaders, having done everything in their power to bring us up in the church, now would keep us out of it because we aren't Catholic enough, with their sense of our difference from them undermining their efforts to share a faith with us. Not only is this sense of our difference a self-fulfilling prophecy; it also obscures what we all share—our Americanness, for example, and our place on this side of Vatican II. Today's older American Catholics are the first to have lived in rapprochement with the modern world, bodying forth the outward-looking church the council called for in a setting where modernity is particularly aggressive and enchanting. As such they have a great deal in common with young Catholics, whether they think so or not.

As far as church leaders' responsibilities go, then, the first step toward young Catholics' fleshy wholeness is fairly simple. Passive and uninformed as our faith may seem to be, older Catholics should regard it as continuous with their own faith and the one handed down by the Apostles, hoping that keener faith will follow. Is this a deal with the devil? Arguably. Will it "work"? Maybe. But if you don't consider us people who are *of* the church, we'll probably never come all the way into it.

But how? How might sensibility be developed, prompting the church's younger members to come more fully into the fold? The editors of "Re-Generating Catholicism" suggested that most observers "too readily credit the council for a generation gap and overlook the powerful pull of American culture in absorbing young Catholics into the mainstream." Powerful as the influence of American culture upon young Catholics is, in my view the influence of Vatican II upon us cannot be stressed enough. And in the analyses of the council's effects, the key one is often underplayed. This is our sense that there are two churches—the church as it is now and the church as it was before Vatican II. From what I've seen, young people striving for a mature understanding of Catholic faith feel that we must come to terms not only with the present church, but with another, older one. Largely through legend and anecdote and outdated depictions in the media and the arts, that church lingers just over the horizon as the church we never knew—an evil empire, a land of milk and honey, the repressive regime, the real thing, a straw man, the Body of Christ, the source of life or of our parents' compulsions and our neuroses. Young Catholics may act as if we're unaware of, or uninterested in, Catholic tradition—but we're grappling with that old church, its Latin Masses and catechisms and Friday fasts and seeming certitudes and its way of affecting those who did know it. Making our peace with that church is often a necessary step toward making our peace with the present one. Failing to do so, we feel that our faith lacks authenticity, that we don't, can't, quite belong—not to the churches of our parents, the ones in our neighborhoods, or the one founded in Jerusalem.

Here a snapshot of my own spiritual gropings might help to illustrate the point. The outlines of it are the kind that Catholic leaders have held up as ideals. A Catholic upbringing that imparted a sense of God's presence and the church's importance, in a family that offered the constancies of faith, hope, and love. After public high school, a Jesuit university education, which provided all the elements of "Catholic identity": the instruments for navigating in the Christian heritage, a number of exemplary teachers and priests, a sense of the church's intellectual resources past and present, and a life among Catholic believers of all sorts, in a setting where religion was actively practiced and intelligently discussed—a school of, with, and for faith, to put it simply. Later, graduate work at a university on the frontiers of multiculturalism, which prompted me to explore and assert my own cultural heritage, if only to set myself apart the way everybody else was doing.

With all due gratitude to everyone, however, I must say that in understanding Catholicism I came to feel that I was on my own. Regardless of whether this was true, it was made so by my sense that it was, and enforced by the fact that my religious flare-ups came during the summers, when I was out of school and pretty much alone. As an aspiring writer, I naturally looked to books; as a typically literal-minded young person, I longed for a synthesis that would interpret Catholicism for me and answer all the big questions: What brings us together? What do we share? How do we believe? What are we doing here, today?

In my pursuit of synthetic truth, I ran smack up against Vatican II. The old medieval and Tridentine syntheses seemed tainted, since I assumed that their essentials had been revised or reversed by the council. Though the broadest of the newer books (such as Rahner's and Küng's) seemed shorn of Catholic language and history, they presupposed the very knowledge of Catholic tradition that I sought from them. Sure, these were shallow impressions—but thus deterred, I never read any of those books through.

Instead, while I waited to discover the big book that would make sense of it all, I read little ones of all sorts—old and new, Orbis and Ignatius, Penguin and Paulist, skeptical and devotional, from Augustine to Chesterton to Copleston to Berrigan to Pelikan to all sorts of "Catholic" fiction—Waugh's, Endo's, David Lodge's *How Far Can You Go*? And then, of course, there were the Gospels and Epistles, bound pocket-size or in massive study versions with their involuted commentaries and tiny notes. Of

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all these books, the ones I found most congenial and moving were those by Newman, Merton, and Flannery O'Connor—the greatest hits of the preconciliar era, I know now. Each of these writers became my companion in faith for a while, as I tried to fully enter into his or her outlook. But my efforts were thwarted, again, by Vatican II. Reading these writers required an ongoing act of translation, as I compared the church they described with the one I encountered, which seemed to give the lie to so much of what they set forth—whether Newman's idea of the church as "a supereminent prodigious power sent upon earth to encounter and master a giant evil," or O'Connor's praise of its "absolute values," or Merton's evocation of a Sunday when the priests were young and the church was full and the sermon was "clear and solid," carrying "the full force not only of Scripture but of centuries of a unified and continuous and consistent tradition." What did that church have in common with the shifty and self-doubting church I knew—its values uncertain, its everyday tradition going back to 1955 or so, its sermons inspired by M. Scott Peck and Phil Donahue? And which church was the one, holy, catholic, apostolic one? As a young Catholic, had I been disinherited by the council, or given the keys to the kingdom?

Of course, the two churches had much in common—namely, God and Christ and the workings of the Spirit in a fallen world. And what Merton and Newman and O'Connor conveyed, as no synthesis could have, was the urgency and necessity with which the church can represent those workings to the individual soul. Even as they gave me a sense of Catholicism's essentials, those writers made clear that this is a "multiform Communion" (Newman), with the believer apprehending shared truths through his or her own disposition and obsessions. Even as they conveyed the tenor of an earlier era's Catholicism, they exploded my view, a common one among young Catholics, that a monolithic and changeless church preceded Vatican II. Most important, my ongoing "translation" of those writers compelled me to actively engage this religion, past and present, and as a result to see ways in which the old church and the new church are one church after all—Newman's principle of doctrinal development laying the groundwork for the council, or Merton's life joining monastic contemplation to contemporary social justice efforts, or O'Connor's Catholic vision focusing on characters who are practically unchurched, and so must grapple toward God through a terrible aloneness.

Is my experience unique? Perhaps, and yet I think that it is representative. For example, most young Catholics are painfully aware of the distance between the church here and the church in Europe, historically and currently. The distance between St. Peter's Basilica and the poured-concrete structure down the road; between the soaring, abstruse language of the *Confessions* and the easy slang of Catholic self-help books; between the pope's absolute statements on his world tours and Father So-and-So's utter uncertainty about whether to give today's homily with or without a microphone—for us these are constant and bewildering. While older Catholics, recalling the preconciliar church and what it taught them, seem able to make their own judgments and adjustments, many young Catholics simply find the distances absurd, and leave it at that.

Partly as a result, among the church's younger members Catholic guilt has been supplanted by Catholic *shame*—a deep embarrassment about our church and its presence in the culture. In part we are ashamed for the reasons that Christians have always felt ashamed: we associate faith with childhood and are eager to throw off childish ways; we disapprove of the church's doings; we appraise the church by its own standards and it doesn't measure up; or we appraise ourselves and realize that we don't live up to what Christ and the church demand of us.

Mostly, though, we are ashamed because we lack the resources of Catholic tradition that might enable us to reconcile seeming opposites and make sense of the absurdity we confront. Tradition can tell us that poured concrete reflects postwar America just as gilt and statuary did Baroque-era Rome; that Augustine's intimate first-person address to God was pretty slangy for its time; and that the pope's triumphal junkets and So-and-So's mike-anxiety both reflect the contemporary priest's dilemma—whether he should speak as a leader over his people or just go

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out and try to be one of them. And tradition can remind us that the church is by its nature less than perfect, with doubt, dissent, and contradiction always as crucial to its project as the celebrated virtues of certainty and authority.

Absurd-seeming, shame-inducing—often the Catholic church in America doesn't seem like the way to God. Catholics young and old sense this, so there are diminished expectations on both ends, grounded in a fear that this religion can't be efficacious, much less necessary. And in day-to-day Catholic life there is far too little that suggests otherwise. For older Catholics, in their embrace of Vatican II, have in many cases forfeited the resources of the larger tradition, and as a result often seem to be making things up as they go along. In reversing this trend, a reacquaintance with the Catholic tradition seems especially promising. For all of its anachronisms and complications, our heritage is a treasure house of the kingdom of necessity—full of riches, from the patristic writings to the purposeful wanderings of a David Toolan, that testify to the urgency and fruitfulness of an encounter with the God who came to earth.

Of course, calling for a reacquaintance with the Catholic tradition is neither a modest proposal nor a novel one. No doubt many Catholic leaders have been trying to bring such a reacquaintance about, with disappointing results. How might such efforts be made more compelling? Perhaps we all could learn from the liberation movements to which the church often seems outwardly opposed. Lacking authorized, institutionalized examples of their own heritage, women, blacks, and homosexuals for example are reconsidering history with a fervor that can seem alarming. What alarms, perhaps, is that in doing so they have not set aside their contemporary urgency; rather, they have unabashedly brought it to their appraisal of history, so that they might bring the past to bear on their current concerns, which, however forward-looking, need a longer perspective to inform, guide, and inspire.

For the church, too, a reacquaintance with the past is necessary, not optional. Because Catholicism has a long and continuous tradition, we must encounter it, whether we wish to or not. It isn't going to go away—but if we don't frankly engage it, it will just make itself felt in less compelling ways, as nostalgia or parody or an antique or a skeleton in the closet.

And the church, too, has got to bring to the past an urgent sense of the present, starting with the hump on the land that is the Second Vatican Council—a grassy knoll, but one that can be hard to see over. Too often Catholics try to pass on tradition untranslated, handing off *The Long Loneliness* or *The Everlasting Man* as if its ability to speak without commentary is a mark of its timelessness. Or we look to the unifying forces of sociology or core curricula, supposing that once the general outlines are in place we can set about passing the tradition on. In doing so, we invoke the one element of Catholic tradition that is unlikely to return any time soon, or to be of much use to us: the sense that the church's chief note is its internal coherence, which will answer all questions and dispel all doubts.

Our concerns about how the church should share the Catholic faith with its younger members are with us to stay, and they are necessarily many-sided and discursive. Recognizing this, we should resist simplifying them in order to make the going easier. Tradition alone cannot answer our questions for us; nor can modernity. We must consult Sts. Thomas and Teresa, along with the social sciences, look at *The Idea of a University* as well as the academic-freedom guidelines, drawing on each as we translate the other. There will be conflicts—but conflicts, as our tradition tells us, can be the grounds for faith as well as obstacles to it. Ask St. Paul.

Those who could lead the way in this, of course, are older Catholics who are willing to engage younger Catholics and share what they have thought, felt, known, and believed. Just as believers like Newman, Merton, and O'Connor linked one era to another through their work, so might older Catholics continue to do so for the Catholics raised after Vatican II, spanning the pre- and postconciliar eras with the bridges that are their own lives. As they do this, they will have begun to pass Catholic identity on. The long-term value of getting reacquainted with tradition speaks for itself, through the babble of voices that somehow have been heard as one, harmonized by the grace that is their common source. In the short term, getting reacquainted with the Catholic tradition would enable us—all of us—to see the present concerns about "Catholic identity" against a transcendent background. History can remind us that the challenges of passing on faith are abiding ones, thus disallowing us the modern solipsism which exalts the present as a time unequaled in its despair and sense of loss; it can show us that the antipodes of content and practice, of believing and belonging, have characterized the church since its founding. Scripture can let us say, with the Psalmist, that to "dwell in the house of the Lord" is "to inquire in his temple," and, with Peter in council, that "we believe we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus." Doctrine can help us to understand today's dilemmas—the Fall testifying that the impulse to see the present as inferior to the past is at the core of our nature, or infant baptism showing that the church, confident of "growth in faith," has long been willing to regard the most nascent believer as Catholic, no doubt about it. And the act of passing on tradition, with the act of translation this requires, can spur us to try bridging all the familiar gaps—between younger Catholics and older ones, between the present and the past, between mortality and eternity, and so on.

In saying this, I don't mean to underestimate the realness of generational differences or the sense among church leaders that what constitutes Catholicism for the church's younger members often barely resembles the faith they know. I don't mean to romanticize the Catholic past, just to say that it's back there, either to enrich us or to haunt us. And I don't mean to chastise the Catholic leaders whose intelligence and compassion have so animated their discussions of young Catholics and our religious identity. I mean only to suggest that the best way for older Catholics to minister to "young Catholics," and vice-versa, is for all of us to renounce such a distinction as limiting and divisive, choosing instead to emphasize what we share—our common faith and our long and complex tradition and our contemporary American situation and our bonds to one another.

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O'MALLEY OF NOTRE DAME

A QUIET MAN OF FIERCE CONVICTION

FRANK McCONNELL

September 1960: the first day of my Freshman English class at Notre Dame. About five minutes after class was supposed to begin, in walked this elfin, red-haired little guy with the complexion of a baby's butt, blue suit, tie, and collar-pin, chain-smoking Salems (Salems! I thought, my manly Camels nested in my breast pocket), and an air like he was trying to remember an important appointment he'd missed. He told us, in something between a mumble and a mantra, what we'd be reading: Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Golding, François Mauriac (hey, wait—this was an English class, right?), etc., etc., and that for next class we could (not would—could) write a description of a physical object, and started to leave. At which point one kid raised his hand and said, "Excuse me, sir—what's your name?"

He looked like he'd just remembered the missed appointment.

"My name's O'Malley," he said, obviously delighted to be of help. And left. He taught at Notre Dame for forty years and is, hands down, the most legendary and beloved teacher ever at that university—yes, even that university, which is all but cluttered with legends. He was a pathologically shy cave bear, seldom venturing off the Notre Dame campus where he lived as well as taught, and apparently constitutionally incapable of speaking above mezzo-piano; and yet his courses in "Modern Catholic Writers" and "Philosophy of Literature" consistently drew hundreds of students per term. He published only a handful of essays (almost all in the Notre Dame-based *Review of Politics*, which he helped found) and one—in painful truth—not very good poem; and nevertheless he was an important, maybe crucial figure in the galvanizing and liberalizing of American Catholic thought in the forties and fifties.

"Pathologically shy" is a phrase lots of his former students and colleagues applied to Frank. By my sophomore year at Notre Dame, it was a running gag to mimic his inimitable teaching style. Here's a classic: "Frank, why is Virginia Woolf in your Modern Catholic Writers course when she wasn't Catholic?" Then what you do, you hunch your shoulders, put two fingers in your mouth, and whisper/croak: "Mmm...Baptism by Desire." Haw. Or—and this was for real—once when I told him about my burgeoning love for Yeats, his response—mumble, with averted eyes—was "Well, yes, I suppose. If you like—mmm—Orientalist myth mongers."

But, conversing with his good ghost, and that of course is what's going on here, I don't think the shyness was at all pathological. It was strategic. Look, it's easy for a teacher to become a "great man" on his campus, if you don't mind feeding on and stoking your students' adulation. But Frank didn't want that. He really wanted us all to find and trust the poet inside ourselves and he wanted us to do it without thinking we owed it to him. To inspirit and to disappear: that's hard. And in that respect Frank as a teacher was a hell of a lot more like his hero Blake, or Nietzche's Zarathustra, than like the flamboyant "good guy" English teacher Robin Williams plays in the movie *Dead Poets' Society*.

There was this philosophical discussion society at Notre Dame called the "Wranglers." Very heavy, by invitation and interview only, and Frank was the faculty sponsor. And when I was accepted into the Wranglers at the end of my freshman year, I went to their year-end banquet. There we were, twenty-five or so young guys who were sure we were the hope of Western civilization—far less than half of us "O'Malley's boys"—in mostly mismatched

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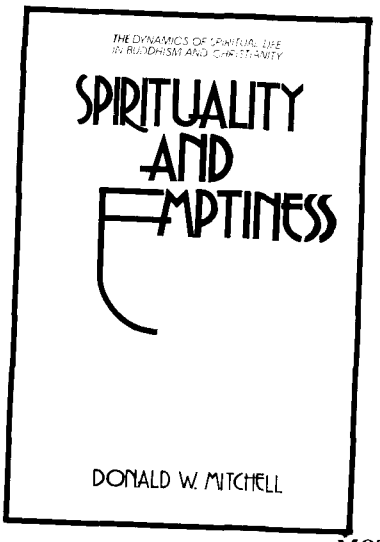

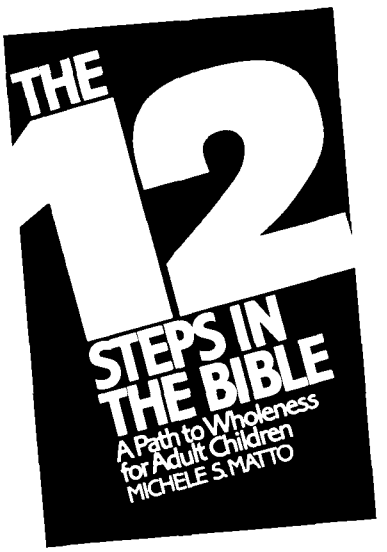

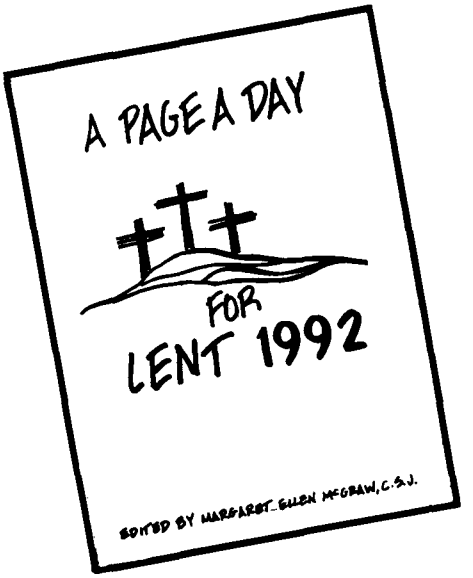

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jackets and ties. A private room in the restaurant. Martinis and Manhattans lined up on the buffet. Filet Mignon (which I didn't know what it was), Caesar salad (which ditto), Baked Alaska (yeah, yeah), coffee and liqueurs. We glowed. We scintillated. Funnier and more profound things had, we were sure, never been said. Frank had been there to greet us, had mumbled a few words of welcome and encouragement, had dinner and then—we severally noticed as we explored God, history, and the Dave Brubeck Quartet—had disappeared.

Of course, he had also paid for the whole evening.

At Notre Dame, on October 4-6, 1991, as part of the school's sesquicentennial observance, there will be "A Tribute to Frank O'Malley" featuring discussions of the man's influence by a couple dozen of his former colleagues and students, including me. Arnold Sparr, in his book *To Promote, Defend, and Redeem: The Catholic Literary Revival and the Cultural Transformation of American Catholicism, 1920-1960* (one helluva title!), devotes a chapter to O'Malley's influence during the postwar years ("Thinker, Critic, Revivalist"). In embracing "new understandings of the church as an organic community, and the new emphasis upon the priesthood of the laity," Sparr concludes, "O'Malley, in significant ways, anticipated the reforms of Vatican II."

No small legacy, that. But there's more. Obviously I've been thinking about Frank a lot lately, and one of my first thoughts is always that first day of class in 1960. "My name's O'Malley." What the hell was that? Either this guy was such a humble pastry that he didn't think his name mattered, or he was such an arrogant turkey that he figured we were all stupid for not knowing who he was (think about Milton's Satan to the celestial coastguard in *Paradise Lost*: "Not to know me argues thyself unknown"). As he glided out of class, I couldn't decide which was the case.

I wonder if anybody who knew him—or thought they did—ever has.

By the middle of freshman year, I was sure of two things: O'Malley was probably god and I was—couldn't miss—the next great American writer. For Frank was unstinting in his praise of his students' work—O'Malley grading on a curve would have been like a seagull trying to crawl—and was (this is the only word that works) on fire with the books he read. Years later, when I read Robert Lowell's wonderful elegy for John Berryman —"We prayed to be possessed by poetry/ And we were"—my first thought was, "Oh, yeah: that was Frank."

Well, most of us aren't born seagulls. So by the time I got my Ph.D. I'd decided, with more than faint embarrassment, that Frank had been just a well-meaning but muddled Mr. Chips, certainly not a serious, professional literary critic like, say, well, me: a sentimental anachronism, sort of like my old Hopalong Cassidy knife.

And then I started teaching literature, and started asking myself why I was teaching literature, and how the hell you taught literature anyway; and began a twenty-five-year process of finding out that I'd been right the first time: Frank O'Malley was some kind of great man. As Chesterton says, there are two ways of getting home, and one of them is to stay there.

In a few of his essays, O'Malley referred to teaching as analogous to the art of the physician: coaxing one's subjects toward a fuller, healthier enjoyment of life. It's apt, because his teaching was always in terms of literature as a way of gaining life, and that more abundantly. He hated the idea of "specialization"—the idea that there was a technique for reading, like the technique for changing a distributor cap or napalming civilian populations—because for him literature was a holy thing. And if literature is that, then so are you and I, because we're the stuff literature is made of. All those "Wonderful!"s and "Great!"s he scrawled on our—pretty lame—efforts were not the burblings of a sentimentalist. They were the passionate effort of a believer in the Good to find and nurture whatever of the Good he could see in others. And there are worse ways to be a teacher: lots.

This is to say, of course, that for Frank teaching was a religious vocation. I used to think that was odd: I can't anymore. The thinkers he venerated—and largely introduced into the American mainstream—were the European Catholics of midcentury who, in their various ways, understood the "Body of Christ" to be the family of man in its sad, funny, and profoundly noble quest for a love that will stay: Christopher Dawson, Etienne Gilson, Ignazio Silone, Georges Bernanos, and, preeminently, Jacques Maritain. His Catholicism was so central to the core of his being that to take it away would have been to break him altogether. And, on the surface, it can look today like a Catholicism we—or I—would blush at, a little too sectarian, male-dominant, and Eurocentric. What would he have made of liberation theology, or of the movement to ordain women, or of the idea that all religions are One Big Religion?

In fact, I think he would have made much. Because his movement was always toward the more humane, the freer, the more generous. Among the "Modern Catholic Writers" he taught were Virginia Woolf, Dostoyevsky, and Blake and Kafka. So by "Catholic" he meant catholic. Those people possessed him, and he was eager to share their joyous possession with anybody who would listen. The point of it all, he wrote and acted out, was not being perfect but continually becoming that. I must quote for you what he says at the end of his essay on William Blake: "All thinkers and artists whose wisdom really burns through the skin of time will give heart to us, will forever help us to know and to be. They become in truth the champions of the should. We cannot help attaching ourselves to them and depending upon them. For they break the chains that freeze our bones, that require us to live as though dying or already dead."

The man who could write that knows a lot about light, but at least as much about darkness. And knows to choose light. Blake would have approved.

Which is why, I guess, the rediscovery and celebration of O'Malley seems to me so much more than a mere, posthumous "career award." Because—you heard it here first—the teaching of literature in American universities today is a bloody scandal. Young professionals who call themselves "deconstructionists" or "new historicists" or "semioticians" are involved—because it makes money and because it garners tenure—in promulgating an approach to literature that is a pure technology of commentary, having nothing at all to do with whatever of passion or life may

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have been involved in the writing of the text, and with no passion or life of its own. I recently overheard one of my colleagues complaining about having to teach Renaissance poetry to undergraduates. "With people like that," she said, "you even have to stoop to enthusiasm."

Jesus.

Every graduate student in English knows that, to pass the Ph.D. exam, you don't have to read many of the texts themselves, or really care very much about them: all you have to do is know the jargon of the current gnosticism, and repeat it. It is a betrayal: of the literature and of the human and of the idea that all this stuff matters. It is part of the reason America is becoming the kind of soulless and mercenary shopping-mall that George Bush thinks is just swell.

I've been blessed enough to work with three great teachers: Frank O'Malley, Northrop Frye, and Harold Bloom. Mind you, I couldn't begin to imagine how those guys would get along together, although I often try. But what they all had in common was their fierce conviction that we read books to save our lives, to serve the Lord (never mind who he/she is), and to make the lives of our friends and lovers better. And of them all, maybe O'Malley looms the largest: the least-famous, the least-published, the most self-effacing. Thinking about him I think about what Olaf Stapledon said about H.G. Wells: One does not record one's debt to the air one breathes.

And then Frank, Frye, and Bloom also had their passion for Blake in common: Blake who, at the beginning of the truly modern era, saw that the chances for the future would be either absolute spiritual freedom or absolute imaginative slavery, and who tried so hard to break the chains that freeze our bones and tell us how to do it. Does the future of literature really belong to today's careerist technocrats? Not as long as the memory of O'Malley and Frye, and the presence of Bloom, persist: one hopes. But for me, O'Malley came first. And what I can tell you is that not at Yale, not at the Smithsonian, in Paris, or Berlin, or at the Library of Congress have I had a clearer glimpse of what it might feel like to live in and for a community of ideas and mutual enthusiasm. And if you want to call that just first-crush nostalgia, okay, Jack, think about your first crush: did it ever end?

CLINGING TO AN ILLUSION

AN APPARATCHIK REMEMBERS

JOHN RODDEN

What was it like, under the Honecker regime in East Germany, to be a junior faculty member at a state university, and a long-time SED (Communist party) supporter? "I had a place secured, a paved road before me," came the answer, as if from a great distance. "You—you've spent your whole life competing. We haven't. My career track was clear—*dozent*, then professor, then *ordinarius*. In time, if I were reasonably productive, it would have all been there. Now, no university in Germany will have me. Probably I'll have to emigrate. That's the only way to escape everyone forever asking me what I did in the party and why I did it."

On a cold, drizzling afternoon last winter, Jurgen Roth, a *wissenschaftlicher assistent* [lecturer], sat in a dingy cafe in Leipzig, a few streets from the Karl Marx Universität, telling me in his soft German about his life as a party activist and organizer at the university. He expected to be let go in six months. He had spent the past ten years at the school, East Germany's second-ranked after the Humboldt University of East Berlin. Nervously he flicked the ashes of cigarette after cigarette, his palms wet and his wiry frame hunched over our little table. He had no idea of his future.

I felt as if I were present at a private reading of our generation's *The God that Failed*, that powerful collection of memoirs of several leading ex-Communist intellectuals of the 1930s and '40s. Even more, as an English Ph.D., a scholar of George Orwell's work, and a teacher of courses in the history of utopianism, I felt also the *frisson* of uneasy recognition: Here was a man of precisely my own age (thirty-four), a student of his nation's literature, a onetime idealist who had spent his entire life desperately clinging to utopian illusions. *Who was he now?* Even as we talked, the senior faculty in Jurgen's department were drafting a motion dealing with their collective identity, as if overwhelmed by the same deafening question. Once drafted, the motion passed unanimously; it asked that the university return to the hallowed name by which it had been known for more than half a millennium, before the Communists changed it in 1952: the University of Leipzig.

More than anything, it was his understated, almost deliberately self-deflationary delivery that made Jurgen's words so powerful. Yet I now realize that it was I, more than he, who invested our three hours together with such dramatic significance. After all, he had been living for more than a year in the aftermath of the

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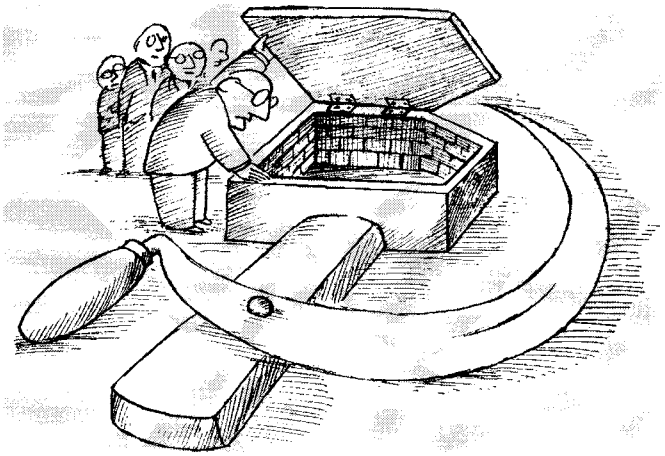

"Leipzig Miracle" of October 1989, the spontaneous demonstrations against his party by *das Volk*. But this was my first visit to a Communist country, my first encounter with all that I had read—and now the hostile old *Reader's Digest* caricatures of life behind the so-called Iron Curtain seemed so accurate! Knowing the painful history of the socialist movement intimately, if only through books, this was a *déjà vu* for me. The mental processes, the emotions, the incremental concessions, the everyday compromises—was this the 1990s or the 1930s?

None of this is to say that Jurgen made any claims to having had a very unusual connection with the party. No, he was typical. Yes, that is just it: he was typical.

Like most GDR university students, Jurgen entered the party at eighteen. It was in the family; both parents were party members, both academics. "At eighteen, I believed in socialism. I believed in its ideals," Jurgen told me. "That's probably because my mother believed in it so passionately—my mother, a true believer, but also one of the few truly intelligent socialists I've ever known."

His mother had been a senior lecturer in economics in a department of Marxism-Leninism; now she was fired. "She's an economist who knows only Marxist economics—and it doesn't work," Jurgen said. "It's too late for her to do an *Umbildung* [retraining], or to begin over. Likewise with my father. Their lives are over."

For Jurgen, belief wasn't everything. "At least as big a part of me entered the party for careerist reasons. Maybe 30 percent of us entered for the ideals—maybe 30. Seventy percent entered for the career advantages. After entering, maybe 10 percent stayed believers—maximum. My mother was one of the rare ones—the Idealistic Materialist! But most of us stayed for the advantages—it was simply much, much easier to make it up the ladder.

"By nineteen I was already disillusioned—more by the timidity than by the lies. You knew what you couldn't say, you policed yourself. You never even thought outside those categories. Like *1984*. What, surprised? Yes, I've read Orwell. *Zweidenken* [doublethinking]—that's exactly what it was, though we called it dialectics."

Jurgen faced his most difficult decision at age thirty when university officials offered him a three-year appointment as secretary of the FDJ (Free German Youth), the party youth organization. He would be in charge of organizing meetings, evaluating students for party memberships, and keeping tabs on FDJ members.

"I never wanted to do it—I'm not a political person. I refused, but they said, 'You'll do it, or no *assistent*.' Finally, I gave in. It was nothing but a headache. Ridiculous. Old men telling young people what they 'really' wanted. For instance, on the GDR's fortieth anniversary, October 7, 1989, Honecker tells the Berlin director of the FDJ to organize a youth festival. The Berlin director tells the district leaders, and I get the word: 'Bring your best people.' But, of course, nobody wants to go. And I have to pressure and plead with them, all the while pretending that it's an 'honor' to be 'invited' to the fortieth anniversary celebration. A bureaucratic nightmare—all *Zweidenken*. Of course I knew I was living a lie—but by then it had been fifteen years."

I asked Jurgen if, in his position, he had had much contact with the Stasi, the secret police.

"Not much. Once in a great while they would come around, just asking for information. We'd chat—I always considered it just a part of my duties, and of my duty as a socialist. Don't you feel that way about the CIA?...Well, I never knew anything very private or damaging about anyone. And I never again heard about whatever the agents were inquiring about—they never got back to you."

Could you, in your position, ever criticize the party?

"That was the one small advantage. Sometimes, if you couched it in the right terms and avoided making it a public criticism, yes. Then sometimes the higher-ups would listen, because now you too represented the party. 'We must do this,' I might say—and I had a bit of leverage on the inside. But it was very little, really. It was a delusion to think we could ever reform the party from within. And we all knew: Never criticize publicly, not even at a party meeting....Sure, the youth leaders were always questioning, always expressing reservations—but the older people would always be 'explaining' to us that X or Y had to be seen dialectically....

"But to stand up at a meeting and criticize Honecker directly? Never. Your career would have been over with that very sentence. And anyway, what would it have accomplished? It would have been crazy. And far worse to leave the party than never to have joined at all. It was like the Mafia: once you were in, you were in for life. One or two senior profs did leave before 1988—when it first became possible to leave and survive—but you had to be outstanding to do that.

"The young people welcomed Gorbachev, but the old people controlled the party and wouldn't listen. They thought things would just go on forever as they always had. The party defections came in droplets and then in waves. In 1988, two or three people at the university. In early '89, maybe 20. In the summer of '89, 200—by then it was becoming too late to penalize faculty, because too many were leaving. And by November, leaving didn't mean anything anymore."

Jurgen admitted that he stayed in the party until January 1990. "Until 11:59," he said ruefully. He had still believed it might be possible to build a reformed Communist party with a mass following.

"October 10, 1989—the day of the first big demo here [when 50,000 Leipzigers marched peacefully through the streets]—we

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had a party meeting scheduled. We canceled it just as the march was beginning—to save our lives! Funny, unlike many party members, I was curious and rather supportive of the marchers. It still seemed possible then to reform socialism. As late as January 1990, we were having party meetings—as if we could abolish the SED and win the people's support! As if a name change [to PDS, Party of Democratic Socialism] were enough! We were completely out of touch with reality. It was all a delusion. I was living in a *Schlaraffenland* [a fool's paradise]."

But Jurgen was as surprised as anyone else, or claimed to be, about the revelations of corruption of the SED leadership, which began surfacing in late November 1989. He had no idea of the full story—it had been kept within a tight little circle. He had no idea that former party and Stasi leaders had embezzled billions for ski lodges and vacation villas, had tortured and perhaps even killed thousands. The stories filled him with anguish about the party. But still he had stayed. Some part of him, beneath all the careerism and *Zweidenken*, had still believed in socialism.

Stepping out into the rain, I remember Arthur Koestler's line in *The God that Failed*: "The end does not justify the means; the means determine the end." Back at the university, I run into a slightly older colleague, who had withdrawn from the party in the spring of '89. He had been one of the very few Leipzig faculty who had been on the streets in early October '89 to protest. I remark that some students at the university seem to be showing renewed interest in socialism, in the PDS. He nods, and then shakes his head.

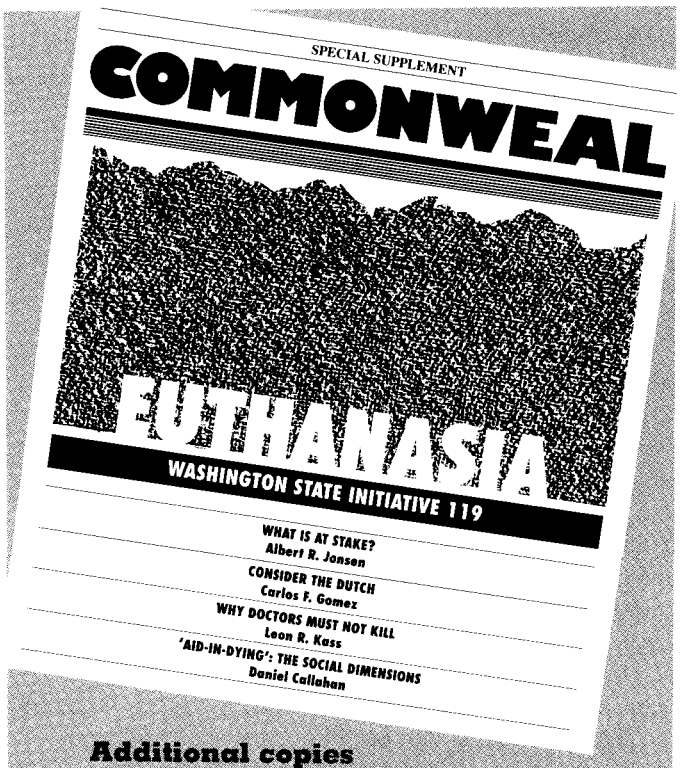
"Yes, already one hears it everywhere—'That never happened under socialism.' Socialism is a beautiful dream. Within five or ten years, it will only become more powerful in East Germany again. As the dissatisfactions with capitalism mount, as the victims of competition become bitter, people will speak again of its vision of equality and social justice and brotherhood....Ah, it is a beautiful dream—and one which can never work. But it will never die."

STAGE

SOUNDING OFF

'MAMBO MOUTH' & 'WORLD'

John Leguizamo's one line in *Regarding Henry*—spoken twice before his character shoots the film's protagonist—has played to a much larger audience than the one that has made a peripatetic off-Broadway hit (it keeps moving from one theater to another) of Leguizamo's own *Mambo Mouth*. The Hispanic gunman is a stereotype, of course—although Mike Nichols plays down that aspect of the character in the film—and a fact of New York life, since young Hispanic men have been known to stick-up delicatessens. In his own show, Leguizamo plays down nothing.



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In his "savage comedy," as the subtitle calls it, Leguizamo presents a gallery of Latino characters (the program lists seven, but he chooses among them so that no performance is exactly like the others) who use and explode the stereotypes, making broad fun of the dress, the manner, the characteristics of his creations and—judging by the night I saw the show—delighting the large Hispanic section of the audience who respond to familiar gestures, intonations, words, and have the added advantage of Spanish throwaway lines which, I gather, were sometimes jokes about the more obtuse "white" playgoers, to use his designation.

Except for the dancing silhouette of a sexy young woman, helping Leguizamo change costumes and characters behind a screen (a macho joke, of course), *Mambo Mouth* is a solo performance in which the author becomes the characters that he has written. On the night I saw the show, Leguizamo came out in a bathrobe, quarreling with the management over lighting, invited the audience as allies, a character that was partly himself and halfway to Agamemnon, the host of a call-in show who was the first of his characters. Agamemnon's pitch is to give sex advice to his male callers, parading his own macho image in a bit that suggests that he is all talk, no action, which may explain his abusive attitude toward women. There is variety in the characters that follow, but all of them are nonstop talkers, using Leguizamo's verbal skills to assert a momentary sense of who they are and, in the process, giving cultural substance to the phrase *Mambo Mouth*. Loco Louie is a kid with a large radio and a recurrent dance step who tells a friend about his sexual initiation in a neighborhood bodega-brothel, an event which may or may not have taken place. Pepe is an illegal immigrant who tries to convince the immigration man, presumably also Hispanic, not to turn him back in, a sketch that suggests that Leguizamo, as writer, is stronger when he is funny and outrageous than when he is sentimental. Manny the Fanny is a transvestite prostitute whose long story about using Crazy Glue on the penis of her abusive lover allows Leguizamo to balance Agamemnon's view of women; of course, this female hero is a man, but let that pass.

The final, and in some ways the most effective figure, is the Crossover King, who is lecturing his fellow Latinos—with slides—on the need to discard flamboyant clothes and behavior to create conservative images of success. The needle in this routine is that he advises crossing over to become Japanese since the United States is presumably on the economic skids. Wearing a black suit, horn-rim glasses, and a neat hairdo, Leguizamo might almost pass as a Japanese businessman. The Spanish rhythm of his speech has been replaced by the deliberateness of English as spoken uncertainly but very accurately by a Japanese man still new to the language. As the lecture proceeds, however, music comes in from the wings and, unable to control his Latino legs, the crossover Japanese loses his façade. This reassertion of the Latino self suggests that the "savage" of the subtitle is too strong; the show is affectionate as well. For me, a "white" playgoer, some of the characters—particularly Loco Louie—are overdone, but that may well be one of the points *Mambo Mouth* wants to make. In any case, it is a fine showcase for Leguizamo's versatility as a performer and his talent as a writer.

If I were particularly ingenious, I would invent a bridge to connect *And the World Goes 'Round* with *Mambo Mouth*, but except that it too is an off-Broadway hit, I am bridgeless. It is a revue described by its subtitle: "The Songs of Kander & Ebb." Although there are songs from the team's big hits—*Cabaret* and *Chicago*—the creators rifle the flops as well: *The Rink*, for instance, and *70, Girls, 70*, a show that I thought should have had a run if only for Mildred Natwick's singing of "The Elephant Song." That song is not in *And the World Goes 'Round*, but there is a heavy helping of the familiar, and the unfamiliar, show songs and others that presumably were written as special material for club performers—"Sara Lee," for instance, a very funny love song to the baker which is performed with great sincerity by Joel Blum. The cast (three women, two men) is young, spirited, talented, able to shift with ease from the broadly comic to the sentimental and romantic. Many of the numbers have been staged as minidramas, but the most sensible decision of the show's creators—Scott Ellis (director), Susan Stroman (choreographer), and David Thompson—is that they do not try to recreate the numbers as they were originally done. This allows the emphasis on Kander and Ebb's songs as songs, remarkably workable in very different contexts, and rescues theatergoers like me from the bad habit—most recently in evidence at *Jerome Robbins's Broadway*—of comparing the restaging to the original, to the detriment of the new version. *And the World Goes 'Round* is all its own and a very enjoyable own it is.

GERALD WEALES

SCREEN

GET THE GUY WITH GLASSES

THE COENS' 'BARTON FINK'

I feel sorry for Barton Fink. Aside from all the humiliating things that happen to him in the movie of which he is the eponymous hero, Barton has one terrible strike against him right from the start: his creators hate him.

Those creators, Ethan and Joel Coen, haven't expressed that hatred by sticking Barton into an uninteresting story. On the contrary, the plot, in outline, has promise. In 1941, a newly acclaimed New York playwright is invited to Hollywood to work on scripts for a major studio. On fire to create a theater for the "common man," young Fink temporizes over the Dream Factory's offer but his agent talks him into going. "They might even have a common man in Hollywood," the agent jocularly suggests. And, yes, Barton finds him. Disoriented by the West Coast ambiance, lonely in his fleabag hotel, and mentally blocked from completing (or even beginning) the Wallace Beery wrestling picture assigned him, our hero finds solace in the simple camaraderie provided by his next door neighbor, Charley, an insurance salesman. The very model of a good-natured slob, Charley listens patiently to our hero's idealistic babblings and proffers the sort

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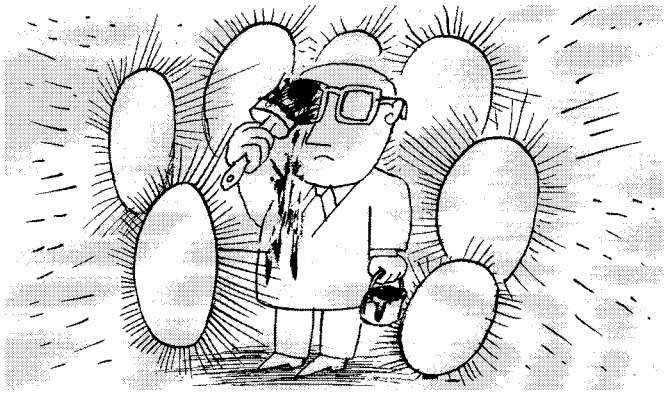
of unreserved, uninformed admiration that only a nonreader can bring to a writer. And that's not all. When our hero is seduced by the secretary-mistress of an older writer only to wake up in bed next to her corpse, it is Charley who loyally disposes of the body lest his pal be framed for the mysterious murder. Somehow unblocked both by Charley's charity and his exposure to violent death, the writer finishes his script in a burst of creative energy. Then, catastrophe. Charley—yes, good-hearted, bumbling Charley!—turns out to be the same mass murderer who killed the secretary and many others. Our hero's script is ferociously rejected by the studio head who nevertheless vows to keep the writer in bondage for his contract's duration whether or not Fink ever writes a filmable scene. Disconsolate in his knowledge that the common man can be an uncommon criminal and that his own willingness to write a common man's entertainment (and inability to do so) has intellectually shackled him, Barton Fink wanders across the beaches of California.

Now storytellers can put their heroes through hell without hating them. Kafka's Joseph K. is hounded to his death by the unfathomable judicial powers of *The Trial*, yet K. represents the victim within Kafka and within most of us and so he is granted a measure of dignity and pathos by his creator. And the story of *Barton Fink* might have shown the realization by a writer who thinks he writes for and about the common man that he actually knows nothing about the common man at all and that, in fact, there may be no such thing as a common man but only an earth inhabited by a multitude of oddities.

But, as written and directed by the Coens, *Barton Fink* is nothing more than an elaboration of the old, cruel schoolyard game, Let's Get the Guy with the Glasses. Barton is the Guy. And the Getting is done by the Coens, with camera, with shtick, with what they do and don't put into the movie.

The Coen brothers condemn their own hero right from the very start of the movie. This judgment isn't moral but stylistic: Barton is a creep. He has a creepy name. (Apologies to any readers who share it.) He does creepy things. Sometimes he does normal things but in a creepy manner. John Turturro, a fine actor, has been directed to play Fink in a creepy fashion. Even when Fink's play (a parody of Odets's *Awake and Sing*) is applauded mightily on opening night with cries of "Author! Author!" Fink walks downstage toward the cheering audience with shoulders hunched as if praise must shrink him. If Fink hears someone retching in a stall of a studio bathroom, the Coens must have him try to peek under the stall's door. If he merely lies back exhausted on his bed, the Coens photograph him with a lens that makes Turturro look like a victim of seasickness. If our hero—this prodigy of Broadway! this literary champion!—is confronted by anyone, whether a boorish producer or a pathetic punching bag of a nymphomaniac or even the hotel clerk, he always, *always* is bested verbally, never has a snappy comeback, never shows a little spunk or even just a little playfulness. This is how the Coens portray an ambitious young man in his twenties who has overcome the formidable difficulties of getting a play produced on Broadway, whom all the New York critics have lauded, whom all society has wooed.

Barton's discovery of Charley's monstrousness is the turning



point of the movie but Charley's criminality may be just another self-delusion of Fink's since the writer seems to be cracking up long before he reaches his revelation. And Charley's final confrontation with the police, staged amid infernal flames in slow motion with distorted sound effects, certainly seems to be the vision of a madman. But a cinematic descent into madness requires a gradual shift in filmic style from relative realism to surrealism. (Think of how deftly Polanski brought this off in *Repulsion*.) But the Coens flub this shift because they jump the gun. Before the movie is two minutes old, some of the people on screen behave in a lunatic fashion. A high society couple congratulating Barton on his success are played and photographed no less grotesquely than the two outrageously insulting cops who torment the playwright toward the end of the movie. If the Coens mean for us to take the society folks as real, then they simply haven't got the foggiest notion of how such people behave. But if they intend the couple to be only figments of Barton's distorted mind, then Fink is half insane already though he hasn't undergone his Hollywood agony yet. If Barton is experiencing hallucinations from the start, then his descent into madness is supererogatory.

Two features somewhat mitigate the overall feel of undergraduate snottiness. First, the Coens, with their photographer Roger Deakins and their designer Dennis Gassner, create a hotel that is genuinely seedy, eerie, and desolate. All the scenes that take place in this haunted fleabag are visually superior to the ones at other locales.

Second, the acting is generally good and John Goodman as Charley is superb. Here is an actor who can make a wink both jolly and sinister and can lean against a door frame in a manner that is both bone-weary and impassable. Goodman anchors his scenes with Turturro in a reality that transcends realism.

The Coens are being hailed as the heirs to the Wonder Boy throne of Orson Welles. I don't see why. *Citizen Kane* and some of Welles's other pictures are the works of an imagination that could create multifaceted characters, use cinematic tricks to articulate a script rather than gloss over its deficiencies, and make us understand the currents of history that encircle us and flow through us. Orson Welles was a real wonder boy, an artist of demonic energy with humanistic concerns. The Coens are merely cynical clowns. No wonder they hate Barton Fink. He babbles on and on about the needs of common humanity. His creators are too cool for that. RICHARD ALLEVA

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An accurate map of hell

HOLOCAUST TESTIMONIES
The Ruins of Memory
Lawrence L. Langer
Yale University Press, $25, 216 pp.

Madeline Marget

Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory, is an uncompromising exploration of hell. Lawrence Langer, using as his primary text videotaped interviews of survivors, gives unrelenting — and, with his argument, undeniable — evidence not only that the horror of the Holocaust never ends for its victims, but that it ought never to end for the rest of us. Langer's subject is the Holocaust's total lack of connection to goodness. He is highly, in fact terribly, successful in his effort. Reading this fine and valuable book is difficult and painful, because there is nothing redemptive about the experience he describes. The people he presents had no choices. They had no way to imagine, and thus prepare for, the grief and degradation that would be imposed on them, and it is impossible for them to resolve the pervasive, corrosive loss each of them has sustained.

The men and women who have contributed interviews to the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale (Langer's source) are identified by a first name and an initial: George S., Sidney L., Barbara T. This nomenclature, in other circumstances reminiscent of the elementary school classroom, here evokes the depersonalization of imprisonment, of the number tattooed on the arm, as each person, in middle age or older, gives his or her testimony.

Malka D. tells of being one of a group of thirty people locked in a concentration camp cellar, deprived of light or food, and in fear of torture. The worst of it, however, was the lack of toilet facilities. Langer says: "She seems to tear the words out of the silence that possesses her on this issue; the people were civilized, she says, and afraid to relieve themselves in the presence of others. Finally, she whispers, the men took string and tied it around themselves. 'You mean tied their penis?' asks the interviewer, and she replies, 'Yes, so urine wouldn't come out.'" Nathan A. describes a mass murder in a Polish town, and of being made part of the burial detail that followed. Some people were buried alive, "...the earth used to go up and down because they are living people. One—the son bury his mother; and she called out, 'Moyshe, I'm alive; don't bury me while I'm alive.'"

In the concentration camps, those who were to be killed immediately were sent to the left, and the others sent to the right. Abraham P. recalls his arrival at Auschwitz with his parents and four brothers. He did not know what being sent in one direction or the other meant, and when he and three of his brothers were sent to the right, he said, to his youngest brother, using the intimacy of Yiddish, "'*Solly, gey tsu Tate un Mame* [go to poppa and momma].' And like a little kid, he followed — he did. Little did I know that I sent him to the crematorium. I am...I feel like I killed him."

I have quoted these testimonies at length because Langer's achievement derives from the source he has chosen to use, as well as from his willingness to see and hear people as they are. In every instance Langer raises, the sufferer has sustained permanent damage that cannot be ameliorated. It coexists with normal life, but it never fades and it always diminishes the victim's opinion of all humanity, including him or herself. There was no ethical context into which one could fit, or can fit now, actions the Holocaust's circumstances dictated. How does one live with the memory of having buried one's own mother alive, or of having stolen food from a sister, or shoes from a sleeping comrade? How do you come to terms with a Nazi ordering hot water for a newborn in order to boil the baby? Witnessing barbarism, Langer tells us, is in its own way as bad as suffering it. The passing of years doesn't help; on the contrary, age seems to make the recollections worse. Making new families doesn't compensate for the loss of the old ones. The terrible fact is that the Nazis did succeed. Very few of the interviews Langer quotes focus on the tormenters; many do not even mention them. It is the agony they inflicted, ongoing within their victims, that the survivors tell about.

Langer says that the survivors didn't, in a sense, survive, because that word has a moral resonance that doesn't represent the truth. Instead, they remained alive, with the living death of what had happened within them. He is absolutely opposed to what he calls "the grammar of heroism and martyrdom": such words as "nobility," "victory," "dignity." Their use, he convincingly

REVIEWERS

MADELINE MARGET, *a writer and reviewer, is working on a book about the humane delivery of high-tech medical care.*

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KAREN SUE SMITH, *a former associate editor of* Commonweal, *is the editor of* Church *magazine.*

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tells us, falsifies and thus diminishes the suffering of actual, decent people. If we make them heroes or saints we comfort ourselves at the cost of failing to honor them. And of course, we cannot be on guard against evil if we do not acknowledge it.

Langer compares the oral testimonies he's studied against written accounts, and finds that though the latter convey the truth, the very fact that they have a structure and coherence means they don't accurately portray the Holocaust, because, as the oral testimony shows, there was no shape or meaning to what happened. Nevertheless, he reads and learns, passing first-hand and other commentary on to us. Moreover, the virtue of his own work does, to some extent at least, dispute his claim. Line after line and page after page, *Holocaust Testimonies* batters us not only with the dreadful facts, but with the author's eloquent insistence that we "share this dissonance."

Soon—in the next decades—all the Holocaust survivors will be gone. Those who perished in it will have no one to mourn them as individuals, or to directly bear witness. But anyone who reads Langer's book will heed the injunction I've heard from my earliest days, and that I believe all Jews—and good people of every heritage and religion—want broadcast and obeyed: Never forget.

THE QUESTIONS SCIENTISTS CAN ANSWER

BULLY FOR BRONTOSAURUS
Stephen Jay Gould
W.W. Norton, $22.95, 510 pp.

Nancy M. Haegel

Bully for Brontosaurus is Stephen Jay Gould's fifth volume of essays collected from his monthly contributions to *Natural History* magazine. The author himself calls it the best of the five, in part because "I have become a better writer by monthly practice." This bit of encouragement to those who practice the writer's craft is especially welcome from Gould, the acknowledged master of the popular science essay. For the past twenty years, the Harvard paleontologist and author, most recently of *A Wonderful Life*, has been sharing his knowledge of evolution with the public in a style which has become uniquely his own.

The title essay is classic Gould. It begins with a discussion of stamps from Monaco, looks back to a crucial meeting in 1913 affecting the course of zoological naming, and concludes with commentary on a recent brouhaha about the brontosaurus on a U.S. postage stamp. Early on, Gould asks the reader to "Bear with me," and, on many occasions, one does have to make that commitment, as he unearths intriguing connections among seemingly unconnected events.

The book consists of thirty-five essays. The main themes will be familiar to those acquainted with Gould's work—evolution (with pointed reminders of our historical and continuing tendency to misunderstand or misuse the theory), the oddities of nature, apparent trivia with a larger story to tell. Because of the similarity and repetition of themes, this is a book best savored in small bites, more enjoyable as a snack than a cover-to-cover meal. It is the essays, not the book as a whole, to which readers respond.

And respond they do. Gould has received thousands of letters over the years. The correspondence, reflected in postscripts or subsequent essays, moves the author outside a world populated primarily by land snails (his favorite research topic) and Nobel Prize winners (his friends and colleagues). Gould's interaction with librarians, octogenarians, and former presidents (a letter from Jimmy Carter receives a lengthy reply) gives credence to his statement that "the 'perceptive and intelligent' layperson is no myth."

Gould loves to expose myths, myths associated with everything from the origins of baseball to the origins of life. He finds, as the saying goes, that truth is stranger

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than fiction, even if truth can't always fulfill the self-serving aims of the myth makers. His greatest intellectual scorn is reserved for creationists. While celebrating the Supreme Court's 1987 decision striking down a Louisiana statute requiring equal time for "creation science," Gould calls attention to the continuing tendency of many, even among the highly educated, to err in their understanding of science and its aims.

This confusion is the central theme in an essay titled, "Justice Scalia's Misunderstanding," in which Gould comments on Scalia's dissenting vote in the 1987 case: "We (scientists) do not search for unattainable ultimates....Our documentation of life's evolutionary tree records one of science's greatest triumphs, a profoundly liberating discovery....We have made this discovery by recognizing what can be answered and what must be left alone. If Justice Scalia heeded our definitions and our practices, he would understand why creationism cannot qualify as science. He would also, by the way, sense the excitement of evolution and its evidence; no person of substance could be unmoved by something so interesting."

Scientists must confine themselves, at least professionally, to ideas that can be tested, theories that can be "affirmed or denied," Gould reminds us. The existence of a creator or his role in creation is not one of these.

An essay with the intriguing title, "Male Nipples and Clitoral Ripples," debunks another common fallacy, a false theory of evolution which requires that all structures have a purpose, past or present. After numerous requests from readers, Gould was compelled to address this question and, using the example of nipples in male mammals, puts it quickly to rest. "Males and females are not separate entities, shaped independently by natural selection. Both sexes are variants upon a single ground plan, elaborated in later embryology. Male mammals have nipples because females need them...." Those interested in clitoral ripples will have to read the essay for themselves.

Amid stories of kiwi eggs, frogs that brood young in their stomachs, and the Voyager photo encounter with Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune (the "greatest technological and intellectual triumph of our century"), the author also comments on matters of current public debate. Environmental concerns receive special attention. Gould has always been ready to point out the tenuousness of human existence in the "copiously branching bush" (his favorite metaphor for evolution) that describes the development of life on earth: "We certainly cannot wipe out bacteria (they have been the modal organisms on earth from the start, and probably shall be until the sun explodes); I doubt that we can wreak much permanent havoc upon insects as a whole (whatever our power to destroy local populations and species). But we can surely eliminate our fragile selves—and our well-buffered earth might then breathe a metaphorical sigh of relief at the ultimate failure of an interesting but dangerous experiment in consciousness." Echoing the prophet Micah, Gould believes that Homo sapiens should walk humbly on the earth.

Intellectually disciplined passion shines through all the essays. In a moving reminiscence about his experiences in the New

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York All City High School Chorus, Gould pays tribute to his director, Peter Wilhousky: "His only rule, tacit but pervasive, proclaimed: 'No compromises.' ...As I worked with Wilhousky, I slowly personalized the dream that excellence in one activity might be extended to become the pattern, or at least the goal, of an actual life." He then comments on our current discussion concerning diversity and excellence and suggests that pluralism and excellence are attainable goals, "but only if we can recover, and fully embrace, Wilhousky's dictum: No compromises."

Stephen Jay Gould's gift as a science writer is that he himself embraces that dictum. The result is a rich and integrated collection of essays. Gould sets down and adheres to three rules for science writing for the public— "no compromises with conceptual richness, no bypassing of ambiguity or ignorance, removal of jargon, but no dumbing down of ideas." Would that those same rules be applied to all public discourse on the major issues—political and ethical as well as technological.

WEAK MAN, POWERFUL STORY

AN HONORABLE PROFESSION
John L'Heureux
Viking, $19.95, 403 pp.

Raymond A. Schroth

It's the boys' locker room at Malburn High, one of those nice preppy public schools in the ring around Boston. A gang of football players—a drunken, doped-up bunch known as the Roids because they pump themselves up on steroids—surround their slight, trembling manager, seventeen-year-old Billy Mack; in a game called Violation, they grab him, strip him, arouse him, pin him down, and shove a broom handle into his rectum.

That's the first chapter.

The school's most popular teacher, the witty, idiosyncratic Miles Bannon, discovers the bleeding boy and, while the school administration covers up the scandal, befriends him, takes him jogging, and, inadvertently, wins from the boy a love neither can control. Meanwhile, Miles's mother is dying slowly of Lou Gehrig's disease. Distraught on the night of her death, Miles goes home with a man met at a gay bar for a one-night, first-time fling.

One day on a jog, Billy suddenly embraces Miles passionately, and, when Miles fends him off, like Richard Cory in the Edwin Arlington Robinson poem they had read in class, Billy goes home and puts a bullet in his head.

What's that you're reading? my friends —some students and teachers—ask. What's it about? And I tell them and they wince. For they both do and do not recognize the world John L'Heureux's novel, *An Honorable Profession*, portrays. These things may not have happened at their schools; yet, the *New York Times* recently published an update on the story of high school football players in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, who penetrated a retarded girl with a broom handle and a small baseball bat. PBS's "Frontline" broadcast a documentary on a small town hysterical with daycare child abuse accusations. And the New Orleans *Times Picayune* has broken still another story of a priest-university teacher having sex with and videotaping boys.

When Billy's father, a coarse, heavy-drinking cop, becomes obsessed with the notion that Miles had seduced his son, the police begin an investigation, and gossip transforms Miles's life into a living hell. The quirky, funny English teacher to whom the class had dedicated the yearbook becomes a leper, a "fag." Innocent, human acts—he once complimented an athlete on his broad shoulders, he is unmarried at thirty-six, he likes to read love poems to his class—are twisted into evidence of his guilt.

Newspaper reporters, including one from the Boston *Globe*, prowl the hallways interviewing students and faculty at will: What do you think of this Miles person? Do you think he's gay? L'Heureux's devastating portrayal of this good man's humiliation, particularly when the police strip him—first metaphorically, later literally—naked with their questions and rummage through his home, is as painful a passage as one will read in a long while.

For Miles, though a weak man, who is sexually immature and confused in his affairs with two women—Margaret, an alcoholic who sleeps with Miles and cares for both him and his mother, and Diane, his department chairperson, who uses him for one of her "flings"—is a very good man. He is tolerant, compassionate, open, kind. And, virtually crippled with guilt: Did he "let" his mother die? Should he have let poor Billy hold him rather than back off? When an understanding priest urges him to simply accept his humanity, Miles stalks out of the confessional.

One of the things we ask of our best novelists is wisdom—an assurance that they not only see with more clarity than the rest

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of us but understand it too. That they not only read hearts but also sense the destinies—the transcendence, the possibilities of redemption—in the characters they create and bring into our lives.

On one level, L'Heureux has handed down a scorching indictment of the irrational fear of homosexuality that can paralyze an institution or a whole culture.

But the larger triumph of this powerful book is that he has taken a sordid moment in a high school locker room—the blood, booze, piss, semen, paranoia, cruel jokes, and later the faculty politics, power-lust, petty jealousies, corridor violence, and betrayals—along with the literature, laughs, and prayers—and told a heroic story about a very vulnerable man, who by his suffering and his courage redeems both himself and his school.

SHARPEN YOUR NO. 2 PENCILS

WE MUST TAKE CHARGE
Our Schools and Our Future
Chester E. Finn, Jr.
The Free Press, $22.95, 365 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

Projecting the aims of education must be an exhilarating—nay, a giddy—experience if one is to judge from some recent examples. The state of Maine (1980): schools are to teach "principles of morality and justice and sacred regard for truth, love of country, humanity, a universal benevolence, sobriety, industry and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and all other virtues that ornament human society." Only California could do better by demanding "true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, including kindness to domestic pets." Judging from recent report cards on American schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade, domestic pets may be the only beneficiaries of the system.

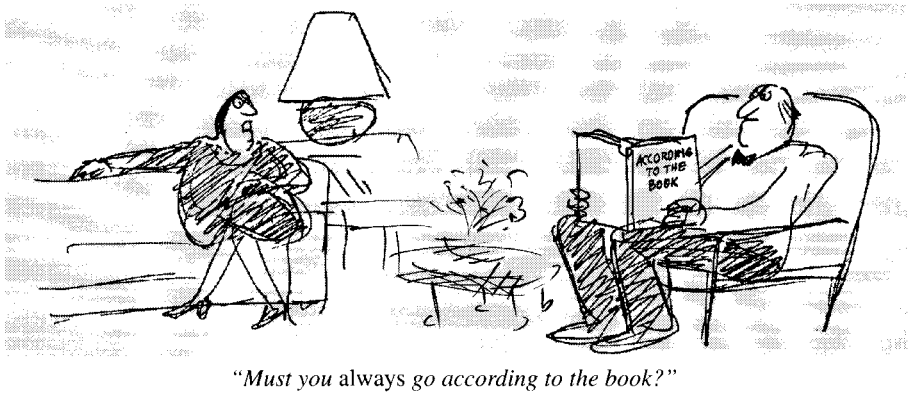
Chester Finn's *We Must Take Charge* is one in a series of alarming accounts issued over the past decade about the failure of American primary and secondary education. Anecdotes and statistics vie with one another to prove the case against American education. Finn finds himself on a plane to Frankfurt and notes that the "yuppies" in the next seat are looking forward to flying the Pacific. Ninety-four percent of eleventh-graders tested in 1986 could not figure 12 percent simple interest for one year. In an earlier alarm, *A Nation at Risk*, the authors concluded that if an enemy nation had wished to destroy the country it could not have chosen a better vehicle than the current school system. Since the United States spends more money on education per student than any other nation in the world, why have we attained such miserable results?

One problem may well be those exalted ends. "All the virtues that ornament human society" is a tall order. John Dewey, though much out of favor with educators, always insisted that one should choose "ends-in-view." Ends-in-view are clearly connected to means-at-hand. Chester Finn concentrates on means for a set of very specific ends: reading, writing, and recognition of the difference between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

If there is one practical suggestion which leads all else in Finn's prescription, it is the demand for some species of national testing of student performance. His testing proposals follow closely those of the Bush administration—and the book carries the endorsement of the current Department of Education establishment, Secretary Lamar Alexander and Assistant Secretary David T. Kearns. Finn argues that it is bizarre to specify any ends at all for education (from chastity to chemistry) and not have a standard method of testing to see if the ends are met.

American students are, of course, tested on all sorts of score sheets from local tests to SAT and ACT college entrance exams. But that is part of the problem. The multiplicity of tests and the idiosyncratic possibilities for interpretation lead to the Lake Wobegon effect whereby everyone is above average. In 1987, John James Cannell (a nonprofessional researcher) issued a brief report to which Finn subscribes. Cannell "surveyed all fifty states and discovered that no state is below average on any of the six major nationally normed...tests." Ninety percent of school districts claim that their averages exceed the national average. Education may be dying—but always in another district.

Finn's argument for testing is so plausible that one must ask what are the immediate and ultimate causes of resistance to measuring results. I think that the immediate objections are superficial and Finn does a splendid job in demolishing them. "Teaching to the test" is one of the usual complaints. As Finn says, "[t]his is regarded throughout the education profession as a heinous act, ranking on scale somewhere between denouncing Dewey and abusing children." His rejoinder is, "What test?" Teaching to a dumb, routinized test may produce "dumbth" (Finn's term for a pervasive product of the present programs),



"Must you always *go according to the book?"*

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but teaching to probing tests such as are used in national tests in the rest of the developed world seems eminently plausible. No tests, no accountability and we are left with free floating ends and kindness to domestic pets.

Determined opposition to the obvious connection between testing and educational ends makes one suspect that there are deeper issues at play. If one wishes to project grand educational ends, it is worth asking whether students are up to the charge. Is chastity a plausible goal for monks or Mainers? Basically stated, are students (as educational "raw material") good, bad, or blank?

If the kids are all naturally good, then the Lake Wobegon effect is an appropriate outcome. Testing, grading, and ranking are suspicious undertakings which undermine self-esteem and democratic egalitarianism. I suppose no one today would espouse a dour Calvinist theory of education, viewing pupils as sinners to be chastised into a semblance of order and virtue. There may be murder and mayhem in the classroom, but the fault is in the system, not the soul. Finally, one could believe that human beings are relatively blank when it comes to virtue, so that education makes all the difference.

Unhappily for education, the "blank" position goes against the American grain. Our earliest schooling in America was Calvinist (moral training for miscreant minors). In sharp reaction to that gloomy curriculum, we rushed to natural goodness. What is interesting in both the bad/good nature scenarios is that education is trivialized. If folks are naturally good, bright, and chock full of values, then education should stand aside and let these natural talents shine forth. As Mrs. Trollope discovered in her travels, Americans are addicted to the "self-taught" person of genius, not the schooled savant. On the other hand, if wickedness reigns in the human heart, education is merely external discipline replacing salvific grace.

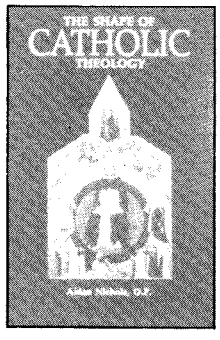
One of the current fashions in education to which Finn addresses himself is "multiculturalism." While admitting the need for breadth in the curriculum, Finn sees multiculturalism as a potential trap for minorities. Multiculturalism can be a variation on the inherently-good theme: if there is a "natural" racial or ethnic wisdom, education should stand aside and let this determinant be expressed. Finn quotes to the contrary Jaime Escalante, whose successful math program for disadvantaged Hispanics was recorded in the film *Stand and Deliver*, "The barriers disadvantaged or minority students face are substantial, but it is the very possibility of their remaining trapped by them for an entire lifetime which requires that such students be urged to succeed in their academic studies. It may be their only way out."

It has been said that education is the American "religion." That is no compliment (or help) for school children. If a D in calculus signs a lack of salvation, then I am for A's all round. But, if education more modestly measures student effort, skill, natural aptitude, and the effects of good teaching then Finn's major argument (for national testing) makes sense. In general, Finn's book is important because it takes education seriously as the determiner of our political and cultural health—that is a radical idea.

Aidan Nichols, O.P.

The Shape of Catholic Theology

An Introduction to Its Sources, Principles, and History



An exemplary summary of the state of Catholic theology and what appears to be its future.

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Though comprehensive and far-reaching, this work is not beyond the understanding of people just commencing a study of theology. It makes an excellent text for study groups.

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Michael Skelley, S.J.

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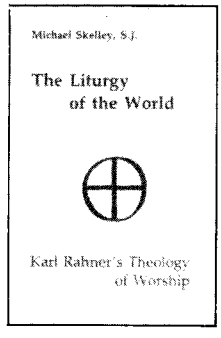
Karl Rahner's Theology of Worship



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IN BRIEF

CATHOLICS COMING HOME: A JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION, A HANDBOOK FOR CHURCHES REACHING OUT TO INACTIVE CATHOLICS, *by Carrie Kemp & Donald Pologruto, C.S.P., Harper San Francisco, $14.95, 224 pp.*

More than fifteen million people in the United States belong to the category commonly known as "fallen away" or "lapsed" Catholics. Many are so alienated or indifferent that they want no further association with the Catholic church; some have found a home among Protestants; still others comprise the group for which Carrie Kemp and Donald Pologruto have formed a new ministry. These Catholics, whom the authors call "seekers," may already have faith in God or a personal relationship with Jesus, yet it is not enough for them. Most of them would like reconciliation with the Catholic church, but have been too wounded, fearful, angry, or misinformed simply to return on their own.

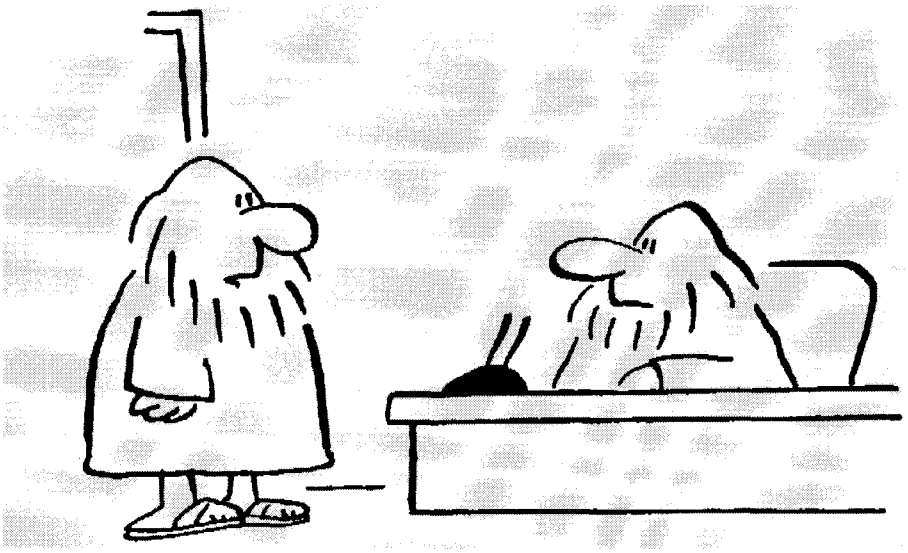
Since 1984, through parish bulletin announcements and newspaper ads, Kemp and Pologruto have invited "seeking Catholics" to share their stories of alienation in group settings with others like themselves as a preliminary step toward healing. This book is the story of what the authors have discovered about seekers—their past experiences of the church, their questions, needs, and steps toward re-entry—and what parishes need to become and to do if they are to provide an authentic welcome to Catholics coming home. The authors insist that theirs is not a numbers game; they are not recruiters. Rather, the process is "the beginning of a lifetime journey of faith and conversion for the seeker."

What seekers seek, of course, differs. However, one thing all seekers have in common, though they may initially be unaware of it, is that the church to which they hope to return is not a tidy, calm nest. Nor should it be misrepresented as such. Repeatedly, the authors state that the ministry to returning Catholics cannot be led by those who especially value obedience and absolutes or who devalue questioning as an important part of faith development. The church today is in a period of transition; its active members and its institutional life swim (or tread water) in a sea of questions.

Judging by their explanations of what the church is and by their treatment of specific subjects, such as the Catholic hierarchy, weak preaching, guilt, divorce/remarriage/annulment, women's issues, changes since Vatican II, and sexual issues, I would describe the authors as theological centrists (on most issues), who manage to put Catholic teaching in a quite positive light. At the root of this evangelistic ministry is the belief that (1) the church is big enough for all Catholics (those on opposite poles of "issues" and all in between) and that (2) reconciliation is basic to the church's own identity.

Because the authors are ministers and not writers, they are at their best giving specific practical suggestions and at their worst describing the big picture. The sweeping generalizations about Catholicism before and after Vatican II, for example, are unreliable. The book also begins somewhat vaguely, using data less helpful than what the authors themselves have found; in its succinct treatment here, abortion mistakenly appears as a women's problem. Some admonishments are made so often they become belabored. But these are minor flaws that do not weaken the book's usefulness. What comes across most strongly is that the authors take reconciliation seriously. In developing this new ministry, the family of the prodigal son becomes the metaphor for the church.

KAREN SUE SMITH



"I hate to leave, sir, but I've decided to start a cult of my own."

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 530)

the concept of "personhood" at this point; that is not now pertinent to the euthanasia debate since none of the disputants disagree that competent individuals requesting euthanasia are persons.)

2. Euthanasia is a social issue because it involves both the person requesting it and the doctor who provides it; it also has major social implications. My judgment is that it is a clear enough evil that it should not be socially legitimated, either morally or legally.

3. Abortion is no less a social issue, if only because it requires a woman who desires an abortion and a doctor willing to perform it. It is also a social question because of the debated status of the fetus, which requires a communal judgment.

4. Unlike the status of the competent individual requesting euthanasia, there is considerable moral doubt whether the fetus (at least the early fetus) should be considered a person. There is also doubt about how great an evil abortion is, if an evil at all. I share those doubts, and believe they should be decisive in shaping the law of the land on the subject—even though in my own case, at the personal level, I would resolve the doubt in favor of the fetus. But my convictions on that latter point are not strong enough to impose on others. I have

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more certainty about the euthanasia issue.

5. Euthanasia is not necessarily the logical aftermath of the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision. It was predicted twenty years ago that, having taken a more permissive stance on abortion, I would soon change on euthanasia. I have not. When does the statute of limitations on such predictions run out? I also work with a number of colleagues in ethics, the majority of whom accept *Roe* v. *Wade* and reject euthanasia. They typically make the same distinctions I am making here. Don't count on dominoes all falling in the same direction.

DANIEL CALLAHAN

Dialogue needed

Gold Beach, Ore.

To the Editors: I hope I have been a happily celibate priest long enough (retired 1989) to be permitted to offer some personal observations on the phenomenal loss to the active ministry of thousands of priests.

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